

A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH CONCEPT OF POETIC

by

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A HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH CONCEPT OF POETIC

INTRODUCTION

Competent poets and critics, literally hundreds of them, have attempted to define poetry. As yet, no definition has suited everybody and every age. George Noel Gordon, Lord Byron, voices the opinion of the majority of readers in a letter to his publisher, John Murray:

So far are principles of poetry from being invariable.. that they never were nor ever will be settled. These principles mean nothing more than the predilections of a particular age and every age has its own and a different from its predecessors.¹

The literary investigator facing this dissatisfaction of the ages over the definitions of poetry finds little consolation in the facts available to confute the easy-going Byronic attitude. Help in simplifying the problem might well be looked for first in the opinions of one's contemporaries. Theodore Watts-Tuntton says "Absolute poetry is the concrete and artistic expression of the human

1. Theodore Watts-Tuntton, "Poetry", Encyclopaedia Britanica, 11th ed., XXI, 877.

mind in emotional and rhythmical language."¹ When Humbert Wolfe's mystical "(Poetry) is less like a photograph than a picture, less like a picture than a face seen by a lightning flash and remembered in a dream"² is put alongside the objective statement of Mr. Watts-Dunton, the case for poetry is far from being clear. A further complication develops when we turn to the definition of poetry by the person most competent to speak on the subject. Far from clearing up the difficulty raised by the definition of Watts-Dunton and Humbert Wolfe, Shakespeare makes the problem more complicated by admitting that a poet at the moment of composition, is quite beside himself.

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothings
A local habitation and a name.³

The apparent inconsistency between Watts-Dunton and Wolfe is not peculiar to our age. Almost every age experiences the same violent differences of opinion. The perennial battle as to what constitutes poetry had out-

1. Watts-Dunton, "Poetry", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed., XVIII, 100.

2. Humbert Wolfe, "Modern Developments in British Poetry", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed., XXI, 112.

3. William Shakespeare, Midsummer Night's Dream, Act V, sc. 1, 12-17.

croppings in literary quarrels: Stephen Gosson and Sir Philip Sidney were at odds with each other in the Sixteenth Century; Dryden was at war with himself in the Seventeenth Century; Samuel Johnson and Joseph Warton crossed academic swords over the talent of Pope; William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, although the best of friends, differed widely on their concepts of poetic; and the modern groups are frequently on the verge of a fray over their respective poetic principles.

The history of the English concept of poetic is further complicated by a great number of foreign influences that can not be ignored. From the beginning to the present, there has been practically a constant infiltration of foreign ideas, forms, and subject matter. The earliest influences of which scholars are certain are the Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian, Roman, and Irish. Coming on down the ages, the influences are the Norman, the French and the Italian in Chaucer's time; the Italian, Latin, Greek, Spanish, and Dutch of the Renaissance; and the German of a later day. By modern times English poetry had absorbed a surprising number of European influences. There was nothing new to which the contemporary might turn except the Orient and the primitives---Negro, American Indian, Polynesian, etc. It is not surprising, therefore, to find

modern poets making use of inspiration from the East---China, Japan, and India---and also utilizing whatever primitive elements that come to hand.

The purpose of my study is (1) to make an examination of representative examples of English poetry from Anglo-Saxon times to the present to determine what elements form the basis of the English poetic appeal (2) to evaluate the critical writings embodying the ideas and doctrines of poetry at different periods in English literary history. The outcome, I hope, will be the discovery of an acceptable answer to some of the following questions:

1. Does each age have its own tenets of poetry?
2. Is the poetry of any given period the sum total of all previous poetry with the addition of such foreign elements as creep in from time to time?
3. Are there some fundamental elements, irrespective of period, which are so characteristic of all English poetry that they may be said to constitute the English concept of poetic?
4. Are there two emotional patterns---the classic mind-set and the romantic mind-set---which are incompatible, and which, blended, neutralize each other as a basis of poetic appeal?
5. To what extent does the English concept of poetic depend upon subject-matter, to what extent on treatment?

CHAPTER I

THE ANGLO-SAXON CONCEPT OF POETIC

With the possible exception of Bede's tract, "On the Art of Metre" no records of scholarly treatises on poetry have survived from the Anglo-Saxon period. Indeed, it is not likely that many were written. "Deor's Lament" and Beowulf give some slight ground for inference that different theories of poetic composition were held. On the whole, the only basis for conclusions about poetic principles of the time is the poetry which has come down to us. From 650-1000, roughly, from "Widsith" to "Malden", Old English poetry evidences certain unique characteristics of versification and a preference for certain poetic types which may be said to constitute the Anglo-Saxon concept of poetic.

In making an analysis of Anglo-Saxon poetry, two precautions must be uppermost in the mind: the modern reader must accustom himself to a set of concepts entirely different from the currently accepted ones as to what constitutes the poetic; and second, strange as it may seem, one must remind one's self constantly that Anglo-Saxon poetry is not primitive; but that it is a very highly developed art, and

has not a few evidences of the artificial conventions of a decadent period.

I. Unique Characteristics of Anglo-Saxon Versification

The elements of versification in which Anglo-Saxon poetry differs from our own are immediately obvious. Instead of rhythm and meter, the Anglo-Saxon poetry had cadence and caesura. The cadence of the Anglo-Saxon consisted of a long line broken into two half-lines or hemistichs by a caesura or pause. Each hemistich had two heavily stressed syllables along with a varying number of unstressed syllables. Instead of rhyme, the Anglo-Saxon had alliteration. The half-lines were joined by this device; that is, usually two important words in the first half of the line have the same initial letter as an important word in the second half of the line. Intentional rhyme---if the rhymed lines of "Judith" were intentional---did not appear until very late in the period. To all practical intents, one is fairly safe in saying that rhyme was not a characteristic of Anglo-Saxon poetry. These are the major distinctions between Anglo-Saxon poetry and our own. They, and a few minor distinctions, are defined and illustrated in the following quotations from Beowulf:

(a) Alliteration.---Alliteration is the repetition of the same sound, in words succeeding each other at close intervals. Usually it refers to the repetition of a sound

or letter at the beginning of words. Consonantal alliteration is more frequent than that of vowels. Alliteration still continues as an occasional adornment, but not as the important structural link the Anglo-Saxons made of it.

Goldfag seinon

web æfter wāgum,

wundorsiona fela

seega gehwylcum

ara e on swyle staro^ð
ll. 994-996

Woven tapestries

Glinting with gold, hung gay on the walls.

(b) Kenning.—A kenning is a kind of metaphor or metonymy in which the simple name of anything is replaced by a phrase describing one of its functions or qualities. Kennings continued to be used in an emasculated form even to the present day.

sæ genga fōr

flēat fāmigheals

forð æfer ȝe^ð
ll. 1908-1909

The foamy-necked floater flew o'er the billows.

(c) Parallelism.—Parallelism means the similarity of construction or meaning of clauses placed side by side. Parallelism is occasionally found later as a rhetorical device in both poetry and prose.

ond halig.God

gewesed wigsigor;

witig Trihten

rodera *Rædend*

gofelice

hit on ryht gescōd

egfan he oft āstōd
ll. 1553-1556

And the holy God

The ruler of battles aright decided it;

The Fielder all-wise awarded the victory

(d) Litotes.—Litotes is understatement. Today litotes is used to give ironic rather than poetic inflection.

Bēowulf *gefan*

ful on flette

nō he *pāne* feohgyfte

for *sc[ō]* olōn[d] us scamigan porftō.
ll. 1024-1025

Bēowulf drank

[The health of Brothgar] nor had reason to feel
Ashamed before shieldmen to show his reward.

(e) Compounds.—Compounds were a very essential element of Anglo-Saxon poetry; they are occasionally used today as a poetic or rhetorical device.

Him so glōcstā

andswarode

werodes wīa

word-hord onlōac.
ll. 258-259

Him that highest answered

The war-troop's leader, his word-hoard unlocked.

(f) Overbalance of metaphors.—Anglo-Saxon poetry was especially rich in metaphors; although still essential to

poetry, their number has decreased in later poetry.

(g) Absence of similes.—Similies, especially Homeric ones, are rather rare in Anglo-Saxon poetry. There are only four or five similes in the more than three thousand lines of Beowulf.

(h) Refrain.—A refrain is a chorus, a phrase or a few lines repeated at intervals. In Anglo-Saxon poetry the refrain is not especially pronounced. Professor R.K. Gordon in Anglo-Saxon Poetry says the refrain is found only in "Deor's Lament" and "Wulf and Eadwacer" in all Old English poetry.¹ The refrain from "Deor's Lament":

þæs oferēode þisses swa næg!

That passed away, so may this.

is repeated six times in the poem.

Following is a portion of a translation of "Wulf and Eadwacer":

Is to my people as if one gave them an offering.

Will they feed him, if he should feel want?

It is not so with us.

Wulf is on an island, I on another;

1. R.K. Gordon, Anglo-Saxon Poetry, p. 79.

Closely begirt is that island with bog;
 Cruel men are there on the island;
 Will they feed him, if he should feel want?
 It is not so with us.

(1) Absence of stanza form.—No Old English poem is built of stanzas each containing a number of lines of a regular pattern, but "Deor's Lament" and "Wulf and Eadwacer" are in strophes---the word strophe being used in the sense of a completed round or cadence.

(j) Caesura.—A caesura is a pause in the line---a break made to accentuate the beat of the rhythm.

Hwæt! we Gar-Dena in geardagum
 1. 1

Hail! we of the Spear Danes in days of old

(k) Rhythmic schemes.—Anglo-Saxon poetry is rhythmically varied, but very few of the rhythmical patterns are like those of the present day, because Anglo-Saxon verse was cadenced rather than metrical.

The structure of the hemistich, the primary structural unit in Anglo-Saxon versification, is represented in the following five types:

1. Type A. \acute{x} / \acute{x} $\text{stíðum} / \text{wordum}$, Gen.¹ 2848a trochaic
2. Type B. \acute{x} / \acute{x} $\text{þín} / \text{agen bearn}$, Gen. 2851a, iambic
3. Type C. \acute{x} / \acute{x} $\text{and forð} / \text{gangan}$, W.¹ 3b,
4. Type D.
 - D₁ \acute{x} / \acute{x} $\text{forð} / \text{foldwége}$, Gen. 2873a
 - D₂ \acute{x} / \acute{x} $\text{wér} / \text{wintrum goong}$, Gen. 2883a
5. Type E. \acute{x} / \acute{x} brynegield onuræd , Gen. 2931b

Each of the five types quoted has variations. As an example of the complexity of each of these types, a section of the variations under D is given below:

\acute{x} / \acute{x}	$\text{wrixleð} / \text{woceræfte}$, Ph. ¹ 127a
\acute{x} / \acute{x}	$\text{eaforan} / \text{eaðweardes}$, Br. ¹ 7a
\acute{x} / \acute{x}	$\text{heowon} / \text{heaðolinde}$, Br. ¹ 6a
\acute{x} / \acute{x}	$\text{mécum} / \text{mylenscæarpum}$, Br. ¹ 24a
\acute{x} / \acute{x}	$\text{cūðra} / \text{cwíðegledda}$, W. ¹ 55a
\acute{x} / \acute{x}	$\text{sunu and} / \text{swæðes fæder}$, Ph. ¹ 375a
\acute{x} / \acute{x}	$\text{beorna} / \text{beangifa}$, Br. ¹ 2a
\acute{x} / \acute{x}	$\text{grēteð} / \text{glíwstafum}$, W. ¹ 52a
\acute{x} / \acute{x}	$\text{sígora} / \text{sóðcyníng}$, Ph. ¹ 493a
\acute{x} / \acute{x}	$\text{mōðge} / \text{māguðgnas}$, W. ¹ 62a 2

1. The abbreviations refer to the following poems: Gen. "Genesis"; W. "The Battle of Maldon"; Ph. "The Phoenix"; Br. "The Battle of Brunaburh"; W. "The Wanderer".
2. James W. Bright, An Anglo-Saxon Reader, Appendix II, pp. 229-240, in passim. Bright based his chapter on the researches of Eduard Sievers, published in Paul and Braune's Beitrage, vols. x and xii.

(1) Anglo-Saxon poetry was intended to be chanted with harp accompaniment.

II. Anglo-Saxon Poetry a Highly Developed Art

From the foregoing analysis of versification, it is conclusively proved that the Anglo-Saxon prosody is far from simple. A glance at the great variety of types of Anglo-Saxon poetry leads to the decision that poetry with our early Germanic ancestors was a highly developed art. In fact, as we have said before poetry was so highly conventionalized as to cause one to believe that there are not a few evidences of the artificialities of the poetry of a decadent period.

The frequency with which certain phrases were used amounted almost to a blemish. Beginning with Beowulf and coming down through "Deor's Lament", Genesis, Exodus, Raniel, Christ, Andreas, Phoenix, Guthlac, and Judith, the phrase, "Lo we have heard" or a variant of it, such as "I have heard that" or "Now we can tell", is used to begin, or is found in the body of, each poem. It is as common as our "Once upon a time" at the beginning of a fairy story. To a lesser extent, but still frequently, one finds "the dusky bird", "the dewy-feathered birds of prey", "the horny-nibbed raven" and "the wolf" mentioned. The raven is mentioned in the following poems: Beowulf, Pinnsburgh

Fragment, Genesis, Exodus, Elene, Judith, The Battle of Brunanburh, and The Battle of Maldon. The wolf is referred to in Beowulf, Finnsburh, Exodus, Elene, and Judith. These stereotyped phrases become so familiar to one reading Anglo-Saxon poetry, that poems generations apart seem to have been written by the same author.

Although we have cited a number of evidences of decadence in Old English poetry, it must not be assumed that that same poetry was lacking in breadth of appeal. On the contrary there is a great variety in types. With more than a dozen distinct forms to its credit, the poetry of the Anglo-Saxon period compares favorably indeed with the poetry of any other period in English literary history.

The general reader of the year 100 A.D. would hardly have felt a lack of diversity in his literary diet when he had the following from which to choose:

1. Lyrics
2. Short Descriptive Poems
3. Elegies
4. Paraphrases of Bible Stories
5. Charms
6. Riddles
7. Gnomic Poetry
8. Poetry Closely Akin to Gnomic Poetry

9. Battle Poetry
10. Debat Type of Poetry
11. Epic
12. Heroic Lays
13. Saints' Lives
14. Bestiaries.

Summary

1. The Anglo-Saxon concept of poetic, based upon alliteration, caesura, and cadence was entirely different from later generally accepted concepts of poetry.

2. It is clearly evident that the Anglo-Saxons had definite tenets of poetry; but until contemporary poets in their experiments in verse availed themselves of a number of the devices of Anglo-Saxon poetry, practically every tenet of Old English prosody tended gradually to disappear, except when used as an occasional rhetorical or decorative device.

3. Although Anglo-Saxon was rich in the number of poetic types, it was as yet colored by few foreign influences and knew no drama,¹ no metrical romance, no sonnets, no odes, no pure songs, no ballads,² no metrical

1. There is controversy over the nature and extent of folk influences on later development of the drama.

2. Ballads have never been definitely dated. It is possible that something akin to ballads may have had their roots in the Anglo-Saxon period.

tales, and no purely pastoral poetry.

CHAPTER II

THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY

- I. Alliteration vs. Rhyme
- II. Cadence and caesura vs. Rhythm and metre
- III. Hemistich and strophe vs. Stich and Stanza

As we have pointed out, Anglo-Saxon prosody depended upon alliteration, cadence, caesura, hemistichs, and strophe. We have also directed attention to the fact that although Anglo-Saxon poetry maintained its vigor until nearly the year 1000, yet there were unmistakable evidences of artificiality and even decadence following the high-water mark of excellence in Cynewulf and the poets of his school. Selecting Judith of about 918 as an arbitrary date, signs of a new concept of poetic begin to appear. In Judith we note occasional examples of intentional rhyme. From time to time new poetic characteristics make an appearance until at the death of Chaucer in 1400 we find that the wheel has come full circle; that a new concept of poetic has laid hold upon the English imagination; that in place of alliteration, cadence, caesura, hemistich, and strophe, we have rhyme, rhythm, metre, stich, and stanza.

I. Alliteration vs. Rhyme

Perhaps the most striking change in the poetic concept is the gradual infiltration of the device of rhyme with an accompanying weakening of alliteration. In the supplanting of alliteration by rhyme, the whole structure of Anglo-Saxon prosody was in danger. With the abandonment of alliteration and the substitution of rhyme, the position of cadence, caesura, hemistich, and strophe was made vulnerable and the triumph of rhythm, metre, stich, and stanza followed as a matter of course, as will appear later.

The earliest example of the use of rhyme in Anglo-Saxon is found in Judith a fragment consisting of three hundred and fifty lines. It is essential to note that whatever rhyme there was came at the end of half-lines, a fact which indicates that at first, although the Anglo-Saxon poets were willing to sacrifice alliteration, they were not yet prepared to abandon cadence and caesura. The following are probably the first examples of intentional rhyme in English:

Line 20.	rondwiggende	wende
" 29.	sine	wine
" 60.	þrymnes Hyrde	geþýrde
" 115.	beunden	gebunden
" 125.	gude	uðe
" 231.	gecoste	ecornoste

Line 272	poligendo	aet ende
" 316	ealdfeondum	unlyfigendum
" 349		strēamas
" 350	dreamas ¹	

In all, this totals nine rhymes for three hundred and fifty lines. The last rhyme (ll. 349 and 350) is between the end word of the second half-line and the end word of the first half-line of the succeeding line. All other rhymes are between the endings of the hemistichs of a single long line.

Other Anglo-Saxon poems, on examination, contribute these details.

Beowulf contains at least one line that looks as if it had rhyme. "The Wanderer" which is preserved in the Exeter Book has a large number of "-an" endings together, several "-ig" endings following one another and a number of "-eo" endings on words. "The Battle of Brunanburh" of the year 938 has "-an" endings coming together and also "-on" endings, to mention the most obvious. "The Battle of Maldon", 991, has an abundance of "-an", "-um", and "-on" endings. In addition there are two authentic rhymes---"maðelode: hafenode" and "stunde:wunde".

1. Albert S. Cook, Judith

These cases of series of identical inflectional endings are not to be taken as primitive rhyming. A passage put in a certain tense throughout would quite likely have a number of verbs with the same endings at the ends of lines. When we come to Layamon, we find him occasionally being satisfied with mere inflectional rhyme; but with Layamon there is this difference: in adjacent passages he uses more acceptable rhyming intentionally. Regarding the Anglo-Saxon poems cited above, a group of inflectional endings, whose similarity might impress the searcher for rhyme, can be taken as a matter of course in a highly inflected language like the Anglo-Saxon.

In Judith we had evidences of rhyme as early as 918. As late as Layamon's Brut (c. 1189) we have alliteration only used as a structural device. The Brut contains

(1) lines which continue the Old English practice of binding the two halves of the line by alliteration only, as

vppen Séuarne stāðe gēl þer him pūhte (4)

þe Englene lōnde æreste āhten (9)

Röderen he nom mid fīngren and on boofelle feiede (26)
these have four stresses separated by light syllables varying in number.

In addition, in Layamon's work can be found

(2) lines which add rhyme as an ornament to alliter-

ation as

Wacō was lhāton þe wel cude writen (21)

Gornouille was wiððe war swa beoð wifmen wel
ighær (63)¹

Layamon had before him a French source which had rhymes of regular correspondence. In spite of this fact, perfect rhymes like "læsinge : kinge" are comparatively rare. Imperfect ones like "biðhte:mæhte" and "pohte:worhte" are common. In many cases inflectional rhyme sufficed for Layamon as in "zungest:witelest", "deorest:laðest", "biwiten:senden", and "luned:baðede". Assonances and partial correspondence often did duty for rhyme. Thus it can be seen that although Layamon received the impulse of rhyme from the continent, his rhyme was a native product. Layamon's rhyme occurs at the ends of hemistichs after the fashion of the rhyme in Judith.

Layamon's Brut belongs to the classification known as riming chronicles. These chronicles, including Robert of Gloucester's (c. 1300) Robert Manning of Brunne's (c. 1303), the Short Metrical Chronicle of England (c. 1307), Thomas

1. Joseph Hall, Layamon's Brut, xv-xvii in passim.

Sek of Castleford's (c. 1327), and Barbour's Bruce (c. 1375), are written in couplets. The use of alliteration in these chronicles is rarely more than an ornamental device.

Between the years of 1333 and 1352, Laurence Minot, a poet whose works are little known, was using a combination of alliteration and rhyme.¹ Previously a poet who used rhyme along with his alliteration paid scant attention to his rhyme, and one who used a little alliteration along with his rhyme made no pretence of regular alliteration. But in Minot we have a poet who kept a balance between rhyme and alliteration. In five of his poems (ii, v, ix, x, xi) the alliterative long line with end rhyme is used. There is evidence that this form was mainly connected with the Northern and West Midland areas in the fourteenth century. It follows in the tradition of the Old English alliterative verse and at the same time makes a concession to the continental influence of rhyme.

In the remaining poems (i, iv, vi, vii, and viii), Minot uses rhyme formulae which will be referred to later.

1. Joseph Hall, The Poems of Laurence Minot, xii.

The elaboration of alliterative effects in these poems is very obvious. Often the same letter is carried through a pair of lines. Double alliteration frequently occurs in the long line, giving an effect of richness. This elaborateness of alliteration is characteristic of the later alliterative poetry.

Our intention in emphasizing Minot has been to point him out as a representative of a class of poets who combined old and new elements---the Anglo-Saxon alliteration and the Romance rhyme. It seems best at this time to recur to those two schools which were blended in Minot and to delineate them in the words of Sir Israel Gollancz:

On the one hand, there were the poets of the East Midland district, with the court as its literary centre, who sought their first inspiration in the literature of France. Chaucer and his devotees were the representatives of this group, for whom earlier English poetry meant nothing and whose debt to it was indeed small. These poets preluded the apacious times of great Elizabeth; they were the forward link in our literary history. But there were also poets suggesting the backward link, whose literary ancestors may be found before the Conquest, poets belonging to the districts of England where the old English spirit lived on from early times and was predominant, notwithstanding other influences. This school had its home in the West---along the line of the Welsh Marches, in Lancashire, Westmoreland and Cumberland, well-nigh to the Tweed; and it is clear that in these regions not only did the old English spirit survive after the days of the Conquest, but also the old English alliterative measure was at no time wholly forgotten, until at last Langland and a band of other poets,

whose names have not come down to us, revived this verse as an instrument of literary expression.¹

Minot's political poems have served to illustrate the combination of the two schools to which Collancez refers. There is a poem of the late fourteenth century of unknown authorship, Pearl, which represents even better the compromise, since in the Pearl there is far greater literary merit. While alliteration is an outstanding characteristic of the Pearl poet's prosody, it is not so rigidly used as to sacrifice thought or feeling. On its part, the rhyme shows a decided advance over the Layamon variety. The first stanza of Pearl introduces us to the charming quality of its verse:

Perle plesaute to prynces paye,
 To clanky cles in golde so clere!
 Oute of Oryent, I hardyly saye,
 He proued I neuer her precios pere.
 So rounde, so reken in vche araye,
 So smal, so smoo^e her eyde^r were;
 Quere-so-euer I jugged gonne^r gaye,
 I sette hyr sengeley in syn [u] I [e]re.
 Alias! I leste hyr in on orbero;

1. Sir Israel Collancez, Pearl, xii.

þurȝ greasse to grounde hit fro me yot,
 I dewyne, for-do [k] ked of luf daungere,
 of þat pryuy perle wyth-outen spot.

In the British Museum manuscript Cotton Nero A.x., the same manuscript which holds the Pearl, is found Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Indeed the author of the Pearl is also credited with being the author of Gawain on the basis of internal evidence which is not, however, universally accepted. Gawain was composed at about 1370 in the North-west-midland dialect. The strophes into which its 2530 verses fall combine alliterative long lines with short rimming lines.

In the last half of the fourteenth century there was a final flare-up in the battle between alliteration and rhyme. Because rhyme as sponsored by Chaucer won out, the whole course of English poetry was affected. But in the fourteenth century the affair was in the balance. It might have happened that England should have found the old Anglo-Saxon ideals as revived in Piers Plowman vastly more to her taste. The A-text of Piers Plowman dates from c. 1362. The metre as the following quotation shows, is the familiar alliterative long line:

In a somer seson, whon soft was the sonne,
 I shope me in a shroudes, as I a shepe were,

In habite as an heremite, unholy of workes,
 Went wyde in þis world, wondres to here,
 Ac on a May mornynge, on Malverne hilles,
 He byfel a ferly, of fairy he thouȝte.¹

Since it absolutely repudiates rhyme, Piers Plowman deserves to be considered as a revival of the Anglo-Saxon concept of poetry rather than as a kindred spirit with other poems following the Conquest, which used alliteration.

Instead of rhyme's being repudiated in Chaucer as in the case of his contemporary, Langland, we find alliteration ignored. Some of the influences which may have decided Chaucer in favor of continental usages can only be conjectured. His family is supposedly of French extraction since his name is derived from the French "chaucier" meaning "hose-maker". The presence of his family in England goes back at least as far as his great-grandfather, however. Chaucer must have received some sort of an education to fit him for the position of courtier and poet. There is a tradition that he was educated at the Inner Temple. At the court of Edward III French influences were very strong,

1. William Langland (or Langley), Piers the Plowman,
 W.W. Skeat, ed. 1.

and Chaucer must have felt their pressure. Evidence of a more substantial sort brings out the fact that Chaucer was in France in 1360 on a military campaign with the king. We have this from Chaucer's own testimony. Chaucer went to the continent on diplomatic errands in 1370. Within the next ten years he was abroad seven times. In 1372 he made his first trip to Italy. On this and later occasions he had opportunity for contact with Italian literature.

A part of the translation of the French poem, Le Roman de la Rose, by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, is attributed to Chaucer and placed among his earliest works. "An A.B.C." is another poem probably dated before 1370 for which a French source is known---this time Guillaume de Deguilleville's Pelerinage de l'Ame. In this case Chaucer makes his adaptation of the original quite free. These two instances are sufficient to show that Chaucer had good reason to know familiarly the preciseness of the French use of rhyme. When we come to "Compleynt Unto Pite" (1367-1370?) we have what has been called the earliest original work of Chaucer, although the fact that no source has turned up does not prove conclusively that there never was one. The first stanza of "The Compleynt" is herewith quoted for the sake of comparison with the alliterative long line of "Piers Plowman":

Pite, that I have sought so yore ago,
 With herte sore, and ful of besy peyne,
 That in this world was never wight so wo
 With-oute dethe; and, if I shal not feyne,
 My purpos was, to Pite to compleyne
 Upon the crueltee and tirannye
 Of Love, that for my trouthe doth me dye.¹ (1-7)

Even Chaucer cannot escape an occasional usage of an alliterative phrase such as "world was never wight so wo" in the above stanza. But never in Chaucer does alliteration assume structural importance. Rhyme reigns supreme here. And it should be remembered that the regularity and perfection of Chaucer's rhyming is a far cry from the fumbling quality of Rhyme in Layamon, who died at the beginning of the fourteenth century.

II. Cadence and Caesure vs. Rhythm and Metre

The influence of rhyme on the change which occurred to the lilt and swing of poetry from 918 until 1400 eludes exact limitation. However, rhyme undoubtedly played a substantial part in effecting the transition from cadence and

1. Walter W. Skeat, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 81.

caesura to rhythm and metre. It has been noted in another chapter that the Anglo-Saxon long line was broken into half-lines by a caesura or pause, and that generally each half-line had two heavily stressed syllables along with a varying number of unstressed ones. The lack of any fixed sort of pattern within the line other than the presence of a pause, accommodated Anglo-Saxon poetry to the natural rise and fall of the speaking voice, thus giving the poetry cadence. But when we come to Chaucer, we find that he not only has rhythm, which we define as the regular recurrence of accented and unaccented syllables, but that also he has metre, by which we mean the measure of the rhythm in patterns.

In The House of Fame, The Book of the Duchess, and the translation of The Roman de la Rose, which are among his early works, Chaucer used the octosyllabic or eight-syllabled line. This line, borrowed from the French, had been employed in England for over a century. Cursor Mundi which dates from the last quarter of the 13th century is an example of its early use. It was this line that was most frequently used by Chaucer's contemporaries. Gower's Confessio Amantis (1396) contains in its longest form thirty-four thousand verses which are predominantly four-stressed. The prominence of the octosyllabic line brings us to the question of how the change was effected from the allitera-

tive long line of Anglo-Saxon court and battle poetry to the rhymed octosyllabics of Early Middle-English. The forces which may have acted are many, the most plausible of which are included in the following list:

(1) The influence which popular song of a type closely akin to the ballad had on Anglo-Saxon court and battle poetry.

(2) The influences coming in through Germanic and Scandinavian languages. Sung verse in Anglo-Saxon, for instance, may be vestige of an early Teutonic concept of poetry.

(3) The influence of Latin and Greek metres.

(4) A strong French influence noticeable in the results of contact between the French short couplet and the Anglo-Saxon alliterative long line.

It is the native element (1) which first engages our attention.

The chief characteristics of the old popular metre, which suddenly assumes such prominence in later Old English literature, is that in each half line, instead of two beats of the rhetorical metre, we have four beats, two of which are chief beats with full stress, while the other two are half-stresses. Between every two of the four beats there is generally, an unstressed sinking. Elision of the sinking may take place in any position and is usual before a final half stress.

The Old English sung, or ballad, metre is, fundamental-

17, a four beat rhythm which must end in a stress.¹

To support his theory of the origin of the ballad metre in Old English poetry, the author of the passage quoted above points out that Judith, The Battle of Maldon, poems embedded in the Chronicle, and Layamon's Brut contain examples of sung verse.

The same author has this to say about the structure of Old English verse:

Hence, the half-lines became independent and the four beat couplet resulted. Secondly, rime or assonance was further used to link the full long lines into couplets. These long lines were then felt to be too long, and a simple means of avoiding such undue length was to use either a weak four-beat half-line or more usually, a three-beat half-line together with a full four-beat half-line (of six to eight syllables) to make up the whole. A new line with a variable caesura, either after the 3rd or the 4th beat, was thus constructed. Examples are found in the poem in the Chronicle under 1057, e.g.

Hēr com Eadward Aefeling to Engla lónd
and Eadmund cing írensð wæs geclýpð²

Whether one accepts Westlake's theory of the ballad or not, one is convinced that he has found germs of a new rhythm in poems of the Anglo-Saxon period.

The possibilities of influences from the Germanic and

1. John S. Westlake, "The Old English Sung, or Ballad, Metre", Cambridge History of English Literature, I, 461.

2. Ibid., I, 466-467.

Scandinavian languages (2) are mentioned only. These influences may have become a part of what is considered the native element. They are not easily traced.

When we come to the subject of the influence of Greek and Latin metres (3), some interesting facts strike our notice. In the eighth century (c. 690-790) we find a large body of Latin writings in England. One of the Latin writers was Aldhelm who died Bishop of Sherborne in 790. There is a tradition passed on through William of Malmesbury that Aldhelm was a skilled poet in the vernacular and that he sang harp songs of his own composing.¹ It is certain that he knew Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. Among his Latin works is a versification in hexameters of his prose treatise on the praise of virginity. He wrote also a prose book on the number seven and on meters--especially the hexameter. The portion of the book that dealt with metres was illustrated by many quotations from Latin poets. In this book also were a collection of one hundred riddles in verse. Aldhelm had his followers, and five poems of his school are preserved, along with Aldhelm's letters, among the cor-

1. Montague Rhodes James, "Latin Writings in England to the Time of Alfred," Cambridge History of English Literature, I, 80.

respondence of St. Boniface. The interesting thing about these poems, from the standpoint of our concern over the use of octosyllabics in a later period, is that they were written in pairs of eight-syllabled lines. St. Boniface himself used eight-syllabled lines in an acrostic on the words Withardus vive felix. He also wrote in hexameters.¹ It seems significant that these poets, living in England, one of whom probably wrote poetry in the vernacular as well as in Latin, were skilled in using the four-beat line and also in using the three-beat line, the combination of which, used in four-line stanzas, became the "common" metre of a later day.

Yet it must be remembered that poetry in the vernacular for the Anglo-Saxon period, which we have previously designated as from 650-1000 A.D., shows only a few traces of Latin metres. Latin metre on its first introduction to England can have had only the subtlest kind of influence. Perhaps it helped condition the ear for a change. But the Norman Conquest of 1066 gave Latin metre a new chance, although it was Latin metre in the French language this time.

1. Montague Rhodes James, Op. cit., I, 73-96 in passim.

The fact that the French borrowed Latin metres bothers us less when we observe that Latin verse itself was really a free but loyal modification of principles of Greek verse.

All the influences mentioned so far had been preparing the way, but the French influence (4) was the one which culminated finally in the establishment of rhyme and metre as parts of a new English concept of poetic.

Layamon in writing his Brut was surely influenced by the French source (Wace) which he had before him. We have mentioned previously that the Brut had (1) lines with alliteration only as a link between half-lines and (2) lines which had added rhyme as an ornament to alliteration. Wace had regular rhythm so that it is not surprising to find in Layamon (3) lines like those of the second class in structure, but already showing in varying degrees the disintegrating effect of rhyme in their wavering rhythm, as

pus gaeide pat m æiden Cordoille and eoðen æt
ewið e stille (114)

ofte was pan m æiden gá and æuore girs panno
pá (138)

and (4) lines with regular syllabic rhythm as

ðuton Nóe and Sem Japeth and Cham (12)

Boc[he] nón pa prídde leide pør anídde (19)

ná bíddeð Lázamon élcne æðelo nón (29)

In Layamon, although rhythm shows signs of developing, the

caesura is still preserved.

The situation is different when we come to Orm's Ormulum which dates from about 1200. This poem is remarkable because it adheres neither to rhyme nor to a system of alliteration. Orm depended entirely for his poetic effects on a very marked rhythm.

Nu, brotherr Kallterr, brotherr min
 affterr the flaeshess kinde:
 Annd brotherr min i Crisstendom
 thurrr fulluhht annd thurrr trowthe;
 Annd brotherr min i Godess hus,
 3et o the thride wise,
 thurrr thatt witt hafenn takenn be
 an rezhellboc to foll 3 honn,
 unnderr kanunnkess had annd lif,
 swa summ Sannt Awwstin sette: (1-10)

It can be readily seen that Orm alternates an octosyllabic line with a seven-syllable line. The recurrence of accented syllables is in strict iambic measure. Orm's metre is typical septenarius which he must have obtained from the Latin. The caesura is ignored in the Ormulum.

One of the best known of our metrical romances, King Horn of which the extant version is c. 1225 or earlier, is

among the earliest of poems in English to consist entirely of couplets. The following is true of its verse structure:

The poem is in couplets that are a result of the French short couplets on the Old English long alliterative metre. The verses have now three now four stresses.¹

In Cursor Mundi, the date for which is usually given as the last quarter of the thirteenth century, we have another example of the early use of couplets in English verse:

The poem is almost wholly in short couplets. But at places (e.g. ll. 17,189 ff.) it has four-stressed verses in series on one rime. Moreover, ll. 14,937-17,113, on the Passion and the Death of Christ, are long seven-stress verses in couplets, or sometimes in longer series on one rime, each verse having a caesura after the fourth stress.²

In his poems, Minot who probably wrote between 1333 and 1352, again evidences his ability to take the middle ground. His verse has a certain kinship to Old English alliterative verse in that the strict syllabic principle is of little account. But yet, it depends on stresses more or less regularly recurrent. Like Orm, Minot seems meant for recitation.

Trew king, þat sittes in trone,

Vnto[pe] I tell my tale

1. J.E. Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English (1050-1400), p. 339-340.

2. Ibid., p. 339.

And vnto þe I bid a bene,
 For þou ert bute of all my bale.
 Als þou made midelerd and þe mono
 And beste and fowles grette and amale;
 Vnto me send þi socore, sone
 And dresce my dedes in þis dale.

Minot makes ample use of the octosyllabic verse.

With the chroniclers the octosyllabic line frequently found favor. The riming couplets of Barbour are an example. His Bruce, dated 1375, contains a total of 13,549 four-stress verses.

The popularity of the octosyllabic couplet is further attested by Gower's use of it in his Confessio Amantis (1396). In point of time Chaucer's use of the octosyllabic couplet probably precedes that of Gower. A few lines from Chaucer's Book of Duchesse shows his use of the popular line.

I have gret wonder, by this lighte,
 Now that I live, for day no nighte
 I may nat slepe well nigh noight;
 I have so many an ydel thought (1-4)

While the prominence of the octosyllabic line has been emphasized it must not be thought that the period contained no other types. A six-syllabled line was used in several cases. Robert Mannyng of Brunne's Chronicle is composed

chiefly of Alexandrine couplets. It is significant, too, that Chaucer's later work makes no use of the octosyllabic line. Instead Chaucer borrowed various French forms and molded decasyllabic verse into many different rhyme patterns.

Though it has been impossible to trace completely the manner in which rhythm and metre came to win over cadence and caesura, enough material has been cited to show some of the stages of the transition and to bring to the attention the more popular types of rhythm and metre in Middle English poetry.

III. Hemistich and Strophe vs. Stich and Stanza

There are at least two ways of looking at the transition from half-line to full line. Rhyme appears to be a motivating factor in the change whichever way the subject is viewed. In its earliest use in Anglo-Saxon, rhyme was found occurring at the ends of half-lines. This is still true in Layamon (c. 1189). It seems possible that the half-lines became independent; that instead of one long line made up of two parts, we developed two short lines, their rhymes forming a couplet. Indeed this looks to be the case in some of the poetry found in the Chronicle. Another possibility is that the use of rhyme within the long line gave a choppy sound for the ear. In this case the tendency

would be to coalesce the two half-lines and to put the rhyme at the end of the full verse which resulted. The caesura would probably be completely lost if the first method, the one in which short couplets resulted, is the true ancestor of the full verse. In the second case the caesura or pause may have wandered around within the line for a while before finally disappearing. It could be argued, and we think fairly so, that the caesura, instead of being completely lost in the first instance, lodged at the end of the line producing what we have come to know as the "end-stop" line.

So far, we have looked at the development of full verse from half-line as a native movement except for the impulse which rhyme, a foreigner, gave to the break-up of the old alliterative line. We are inclined to believe that both the changes outlined above may have taken place, one with some poets and one with others. Also, it is possible and probable that foreign influences other than rhyme were at work. However, even when a foreign pattern can be pointed to, some explanation is usually necessary to show how the native elements are adapted to the new form.

Anglo-Saxon poetry had no division into stanzas. Lines followed one another almost without break. In Greek poetry a term "strophe" originated to apply to the strain which the chorus sang while making the movement from right to left in a choral dance. In connection with Anglo-Saxon

poetry, we use the same Greek word to convey a meaning different from the narrow technical sense which it had originally in the Greek. Now we call Anglo-Saxon poetry strophic, because certain poems like "Wulf and Eadwacer" and "Deor's Lament" are made up of groups of lines forming a metrical unit something like a stanza, but without a definite number of lines, and because other Anglo-Saxon poems have lines following one another which artistically belong together for the reason that they produce a certain mood, or belong to the same speaker, or relate an episode. Anglo-Saxon poetry was meant to be sung with harp accompaniment. It would have been very easy for the harpist to indicate by his playing the change in mood of certain passages or to call attention to the introduction of a new speaker. The manuscript of Beowulf had Roman numerals in its left-hand margin which have never been adequately explained. These numerals are found most frequently on a line with the beginning of a new speech. This seems to bear out the idea that lines spoken by the same person formed a strophe. Beowulf also has a number of outside episodes introduced into its text which might be considered as strophes.

As has already been indicated, the application of the term strophe to Anglo-Saxon poetry does not carry with it

the same implication as when used in connection with Greek poetry. Indeed, it must be remembered that the Anglo-Saxons probably had no acquaintance whatsoever with the Greek strophic form. The characteristic of Anglo-Saxon poetry which we have called "strophic" in this paper, is probably derived from a feeling for structural unity which would lead a poet to group together lines of a certain mood, lines of the same speaker, or lines forming an episode. When a short poem consisted of a single strophe, it might be called a "fitt" or song. Longer poems, as for instance Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, sometimes were composed of these "fitts" or groups of a varying number of lines.

Although Anglo-Saxon poetry is not indebted to the Greek for strophic form, it is probable that at a later date English poetry became stanzaic indirectly through Greek influence. The stanza is thought to have had an origin rather early in the history of Greek meter.

A hexameter, full of energy and exaltation, followed by a descending and melancholy pentameter, had an immediate tendency to take a complete form and this is the origin of the stanza.¹

A distich, or the coupling of two lines, is the

1. Edmund Gosse, "Verse", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed., XXIII, 96.

logical beginning of the stanza form since it is the simplest type. Originally, in Greek these distichs were not linked by rhyme. In fact, rhyme is of fairly late Latin origin:

Recent criticism has been inclined to look upon the African church-Latin of the age of Tertullian as the starting-point of modern rhyme, and it is probable that the ingenuities of priests, invented to aid worshippers in hearing and singing long pieces of Latin verse in the ritual of the Catholic church, produced the earliest conscious poems in rhyme. It is certain that by the 4th century a school of rhymed sacred poetry had come into existence, classical examples of which we still possess in the "Stabat Mater" and the "Dies Irae". In the course of the middle ages, alliteration, assonance, and end-rhyme held the field without rival in vernacular poetry.¹

In French poetry the rhymed couplet was extensively used. Undoubtedly, this had its effect in bringing about the widespread use of the rhymed couplet in English in the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries.

We have seen how the ends of half-lines were coupled in Judith and Layamon, a fact, incidentally, which seems to support one in the conclusion that the rhymed couplet in English came from an expansion of the half-line. An enumeration of some of the more important pieces of Middle English

1. "Rhyme", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 14th ed., XIX, 270-271.

writings which used the form of the rhymed couplet will give some indication of its popularity. Two of the most famous of the metrical romances of the period, King Horn (c. 1225) and Havelok the Dane (1275-1301) are in couplets. The Cursor Mundi employed it. Mention has already been made of its use in the rhyming chronicles.

Many experiments were tried with the couplet. It was expanded and changed in different ways. It could be varied by a change in meter or a change in rhyme. We have an example of a three-stressed line in couplets in a poem from the Chronicle for the year 1036. The septenarius meter of Old had an eight-syllabled line followed by a seven-syllabled line. However, in some manuscripts the two lines are printed as one long line. In Mannyng's Chronicle we find rhymed Alexandrines being used. Primarily, the couplet was made up of two lines that were matched in rhyme or matched in length. Ways and means of expanding the couplet were numerous. The Cursor Mundi, although chiefly in couplets, had series of verses on one rhyme, thus, aaaaa. This was one manner of expansion. We find this type of stanza more standardized in Minot (1338-1352), who frequently used a six-line stanza with the rhyme scheme aaaaab. In the poetry of Richard Rolle of Hampole who died in 1349, there is a long passage of three-stressed verse

rhyming abab which shows another variation which the couplet might adopt---that of alternation of rhymes. Another interesting type of variation is found in the twelve-line stanzas of "Springtime" (c. 1300) with its formula of aabccbcbbaab.

Enough has been said to indicate that poets were experimenting with rhyme and meter, and to indicate how much variety could be gained from changing the couplet alone. However, it is not to be imagined that experimentation stopped with the couplet.

A source for some of the new stanza patterns which were used in the Middle English period (1050-1400) might well be sought for in Latin religious lyrics. Certainly Latin had its influence on some of the anonymous lyrics which are extant from the period. "A Hymn to the Virgin" (c. 1300) combines Latin lines with English verses to make graceful stanzas:

Of on that is so fayr and bright,

Velut marie stella,

Brighter than the day is light,

Parens et puella:

Ic eric to the, thou se to me,

Levedy, preye thi sone for me,

Tam pia,

That ic mote come to the,

maria.¹

In the poems of Laurence Minot (1335-1352) we find several stanza patterns. One of his rhyme formulae, aabceeb, (iv), is that of the poem "Springtime" which has already been mentioned, except that Minot stops at six lines whereas the previous poet carried it out through twelve lines. Minot also makes use of an eight-line stanza built on two rhymes which are alternated, abababab. One of Minot's stanza forms is of particular interest because we find Chaucer using it later. It is an eight-line stanza rhyming ababbefe. However Minot writes his in octosyllabic verse whereas Chaucer uses the decasyllabic. It was to this pattern that Spenser added an Alexandrine in "c" to form the Spenserian stanzas.

The poems, Pearl, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Patience, and Cleanness are considered together because they are contained in the same manuscript and because they have been thought by some scholars to be the work of one poet. They show a diversity of metrical experiment. Pa-

1. James Row McCollum, English Literature: The Beginnings to 1500, p. 334.

tience and Cleanness, which seem to be the earliest, are written in alliterative long lines arranged in unrhymed quatrains, although the quatrain system here and there breaks down. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight appears to have been written toward the end of the Fourteenth Century. The following has been said about its prosody:

It consists of 2650 verses in strophes of varying length, the strophe being made up of alliterative long lines concluding with five short riming lines ababa, the first of one stress, the rest of three stresses each. The poem is divided into four fyttes, not arbitrarily, but in close accord with the division of the matter.¹

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is an excellent example of the transition since it is a combination of the old strophic-form and the new stanzaic-form. Pearl, which also belongs to the latter part of the Fourteenth Century, uses alliteration within the line and rhyme at the end of each line, whereas in Gawain a group of alliterative lines were concluded by a five-lined rhyming section called a "wheel". In the Pearl, alliteration and rhyme are woven together in the same stanza: in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, although both alliteration and rhyme are used they

1. John E. Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English, 84.

are kept distinct.

The stanzaic-form of Pearl consists of twelve lines with four accents each rhymed according to the scheme ababababbebe. That this formula may have been used by previous poets is possible, but it is difficult to say whether any of the extant poems in this meter belong to a date earlier than Pearl. The meter in which the poem is written seems to have been a popular one. The stanza-pattern is the most interesting form before Chaucer.

In Pearl the one-hundred and one stanzas are divided into twenty sections consisting of five stanzas each. Each of the five stanzas has the same refrain. Section fifteen is unusual in having six stanzas. Throughout the poem the last or main word of the refrain is used in the first line of the next stanza. The last line of the poem echoes the first line. It is interesting to note that many of the writers of sonnet-cycles in the sixteenth century linked their sonnets in some such fashion as this.

It has been said that Chaucer (1340-1400) was a poet who owed a great deal to scholarship. His acquaintance with foreign literature brought him into contact with the forms which France and Italy had developed.

Chaucer was our first great metrist, and enriched our literature with several forms of metre which had not been previously employed in English. These he borrowed chiefly from Guillaume de Machault, who made use of stanzas of

seven, eight, and nine lines, and even wrote at least one Complaint in the heroic couplet.

The metre of four accents, in rimed couplets, had been in use in English long before Chaucer's time; and he adopted it in translating Le Roman de la Rose (the original being in the same metre), in the book of the Duchess, and in the House of Fame.

The ballad-metre, as employed in the Tale of Sir Thopas, is also older than his time. In fact, this Tale is a burlesque imitation of some of the old Romances.

The four-line stanza, in the Proverbs, was likewise nothing new.

But he employed the following metres, in English, for the first time.

1. The 8-line stanza, with the rimes arranged in the order ababbc; i.e. with the first line (a) riming with the third (a), and so on. Exx. A.B.C.; The Monkes Tale; The Former Age; Leuoy to Bukton.

1 b. The same, thrice repeated, with a refrain. Ex. (part of) Fortune Complaint to Venus; Palade to Rosomunde.

2. The 7-line stanza, with the rimes aabbc; a favourite metre. Exx. Lyf of Saint Geoyle; Clerkes tale; Palamon and Arcite; (part of) Complaint to his Lady; An Amorous Complaint; Complaint to Pite; (part of) Anelida; The wretched endering of Mankind; The Man of Lawes Tale; (part of) The Complaint of Mars; Trollus and Criseyde; Wordes to Adam; (part of) The Parlement of Foules; (part of) The Canterbury Tales; Leuoy to Icopan.

2 b. The same 7-line stanza, thrice repeated, with a refrain. Exx. Against Women Unconstaunt; Complaint to his Purse; Lak of Stedfastnesse; Centilnesse; Truth. Also in the Legend of Good Women, 240-250.

2 c. The 7-line stanza, with the rimes ababbab Ex. (part of) Fortune.

3. Terza Rima. Only a few lines; in the Complaint to his Lady.

4. The 10-line stanza, aabaabcc. In the Complaint to his Lady.

5. The 9-line stanza, aabaabbab. Only in Anelida.

5 b. The same, with internal rimes. Only in Anelida.

5 c. The same as 5, but thrice repeated. Only in Womanly Noblesse.

6. Two stanzas of 16 lines each; with the rimes aaabaab-bbbabbba. Only in Anelida.

7. The 9-line stanza, aabaabcc. Only in the latter part of the Complaint of Mars.

8. The Roundel. In the Parlement of Foules; and Merciless Beaute.

9. The heroic couplet. In the Legend of Good Women and parts of Canterbury Tales.

10. A 6-line stanza, repeated six times; with the rimes abatch. Only in the Envoy to the Clerken Tale.

11. A 10-line stanza, aabaabaab. Only in the Envoy to the Complaint of Venus.

12. A 6-line stanza, ababaa. Only in the Envoy to Womanly Noblesse.

13. A 6-line stanza, aabba. Only in the Envoy to Complaint to his purse.¹

Chaucer's chief contributions are the seven-line stanza of the Troilus and the so-called Heroic Couplet, both of which are written in decasyllabic verse. Skeat gives Chaucer credit for using the rhyme scheme ababbcb for the first time in English, but as we have pointed out previously, Minot was before Chaucer in the use of this rhyme formula.

There is one point in Chaucer's versification which may be a remnant of the Anglo-Saxon concept of poetic, and that is the presence of a caesura in his line. Chaucer indicates his caesura or slight pause in the middle of the line by the sense of the passage. However, most foreign poetry made use of the caesura so that this feature of his poetry also may have been derived from the continent.

Summary

By the death of Chaucer the outcome of this struggle

1. Walter W. Skeat, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, xxi-xxii.

between alliteration and rhyme is apparent. Rhyme has won over alliteration. Rhythm and metre stand out as necessary qualities of poetry. The full line has definitely triumphed over the half-line. Stanza-form has been successfully experimented with. English poets have ready at their hands the tools which they are to utilize for a number of centuries.

It remains to make a list of the types of poetry which were popular in Middle English, the period to which this chapter was devoted, and to enumerate some of the devices which were frequently used.

A. Types of Poetry Popular in Middle English

1. Breton lais as popularized by Marie de Franco
2. Fabliaux--fabellae ignobilium--Chaucer's Miller's Tale
3. Exempla--Gesta Romanorum
4. Miracles of Our Lady--The Prioress's Tale
5. Miracles Mystery, and Morality Plays
6. Beast Epics, Beast fables, Bestiaries
7. Ballads
8. Rimed Chronicles
9. Romances
10. Lyrics

B. Characteristic Devices in Middle English Poetry

1. The Dream Vision
2. Enumeration
3. Detailed description
4. Frequent reference to 'myn auctor'
5. Mathematical Fundamental Image

CHAPTER III

EXPERIMENTS WITH THE STANZA

English poets of the fourteenth century had to make an important decision relative to their concept of poetic--- they had to decide exactly what they would do about rhyme.

(1) If they admitted rhyme as a structural, rather than as an ornamental, device, it meant that they would have to sacrifice alliteration as a structural device and reduce it to the rank of ornament.

(2) If they accepted rhyme rather than alliteration as a structural device, it meant that they had to sacrifice cadence, caesura, hemistich, and strophe, to rhythm, meter, stich, and stanza to achieve organic unity.

After a terrific struggle which reached a climax in the fourteenth century, rhyme finally won out, and the Anglo-Saxon concept of poetic, although never completely discarded, sank for the time being, to the position of ornament.

Having committed themselves to rhyme, the Middle English poets had to experiment with their newly adopted tools:

(1) They had to experiment with rhythm until the more

exact patterns of accent fit the thought.

(2) They had to experiment with the meters until the more exact cadences took on an element of smoothness.

(3) They had to experiment with rhymes until the new appeals to the ear took on the air of familiarity.

(4) They had to experiment with rhythm, meter, and rhymes in stanza forms until they had perfected series of lines of sufficient length to contain the thought groups. Essentially, the stanza is a unit made up of a group of lines of a certain number. In structure the lines of each stanza of the poem must resemble those of other stanzas in number, length (i.e., number of feet or measures) rhythmical structure, and arrangement. We have noted that in medieval poetry rhyme became a structural feature of great importance. In stanzas of the same pattern the arrangement of rhymes had to be identical.

It took nearly two centuries for the English poets to gain complete mastery of the new tools; and even then, they insisted in retaining in the form of blank verse, the old freedom of unrhymed lines which was so characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon concept of poetic.

The tools which have been utilized in experimentation with stanzaic form in English have been enumerated. However, they require further elaboration. Rhythm is the

succession of different kinds of movement in a definite and recurring order. The more exact rhythms which were introduced in the transitional period achieved popularity. The combinations of long, or accented syllables, with short, or unaccented syllables, in patterns are called feet or measures. The rhythm of a poem is the rhythm of the kind of foot which predominates. Though there are other possible combinations of syllables, only the following feet are found to any extent in English poetry:

1. The Kinds of Rhythms or Feet ¹

(a) -- Iambus (or Iamb).—Illustrated by words like "afraid", "oppose", "delight".

thē stāg|āt ēve|hād drūnk|hīs fill|

(b) -- Trochee.—Illustrated by words like "gather", "going", "heartless".

soft and|ēasy|is thy|cradle|

(c) -- Spondee.—Illustrated by words like "bookcase", "bright-eyed", "mayday".

(d) -- Pyrrhic.—A foot of two short syllables, used as a variation.

1. Louis Untermeyer, The Forms of Poetry, pp. 14-17 in passim.

(e) -- Dactyl.—Illustrated by words like "happiness", "drearily", "satisfy".

Love again, | song again, | nest again, | young again |

(f) -- Anapest.—Illustrated by words like "interrupt", "supersede", "Viennese".

With the sheep | in the fold | and the cows | in
their stalls |

(g) -- Amphibrach.—A trio of short, long, and short syllables.

I sprang to | the saddle | and Joris | and he |

(h) -- Amphimacer.—A trio of long short and long syllables.

Neck to neck, | stride by stride |

Of these various kinds of feet only four---the iambus, the trochee, the dactyl, and the anapest---are really important in English verse. The others are sometimes used as substitute feet. The iambus and the anapest which begin with the unaccented syllables are sometimes called "ascending rhythms"; whereas the trochee and the dactyl, which begin with the accented syllables, are called "descending rhythms". The ascending rhythms are the more preponderant in English verse. Quite evidently they make the stronger appeal to the English ear.

"Meter" in used with English poetry is the measure of

the rhythm; "meter" as a suffix is used to denote the measure of the number of feet in the line. On the basis of number of feet, lines are classified as follows:

II. Meter: The Number of Feet to the Line

(a) Monometer.—The monometer has one metrical foot or measure to the line.

Thus I

Pass by,

And die:

(b) Dimeter.—Dimeter has two metrical feet or measures to the line.

Take her up|tenderly|

Lift her|with care|

(c) Trimeter.—Trimeter has three metrical feet to the line.

And teach|me how|to sing|

Unto|the lyric string|

My measure ravishing.)

(d) Tetrameter.—Tetrameter has four metrical feet to the line.

Come live with me and be my love;

(e) Pentameter.—Pentameter has five metrical feet to the line.

How far|that little candle throws|
his beams.'|,

The decasyllabic line which was introduced into English by Chaucer is a pentameter line.

(f) Hexameter.—Hexameter has six metrical feet to the line. Theoretically, the English hexameter in imitation of classical hexameter, should be a six-foot catalectic verse made up of five successive dactyls and a trochee. But there is a rule which allows for substitution of a spondee for any of the feet. Gabriel Harvey (1545-1633) introduced the hexameter into English poetry in his Incomium Lauri. The meter soon fell into disuse but was revived in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This revival came chiefly as a result of the use of the hexameter in translations from the German.¹ Longfellow's Evangeline is written in hexameter.

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines
and the hemlocks

The Alexandrine is a six-foot iambic line. Robert Mannyng of Brunne probably employed the meter for the first time in English in his translation of Peter Langtoft's Chronicle, partly composed in French Alexandrines.² Origi-

1. Jakob Schipper, History of English Versification, pp. 262-263.

2. Ibid. p. 204.

nally there had to be a caesural pause after the third foot. Upon its introduction it was used primarily in rhymed couplets. The importance of the line in English depends chiefly on its use as the concluding line of the Spenserian stanza.

(g) Septenary.—The Septenary is a long scrambling seven accent line. Kipling's Pallad of East and West is a modern example of its use.

Oh, East|is East,|and West|is West,|and never|the
twain|shall meet|

The septenary was used a great deal in Middle English poetry. Its Medieval Latin model can not be exactly determined. If, as seems most likely, the model was brachycatalectic trochaic tetrameter, the result of our attempt to adopt this meter might be accounted for by the preference of our language for the iambic rhythm. The Poema Morale, which dates from the twelfth century, is, as far as is known, the earliest Middle English poem in septenary.¹ Ormulum's use of the meter (c. 1200) is better known.

Common or Pallad Meter is the familiar stanza of the

1. Jakob Schipper, History of English Versification, pp. 204-206, in passim.

early ballads. This stanza could be regarded as two long lines---septenaries in couples---or as four short lines, alternating four and three beats. The Chevy Chase ballad was found written in long lines. When there was internal rhyme in the long couplet, there was good reason for the couplet breaking into quatrains.¹ However, a line of seven accents is too long to last.

(h) Poulter's Measure.---Poulter's measure is made up of an Alexandrine line in combination with a septenary. Alexandrines and septenaries were quite frequently combined unsystematically in Middle English verse. Later, in the Miracle Plays, the Alexandrine was often found rhyming with the septenary. The first Tudor English prosodists were familiar with this measure under the name of Poulter's measure, so-called, as Gascoigne tells us, "because the poulterer giveth twelve for one dozen and fourteen for another". This meter is no longer well known.²

There was no necessity for developing the line beyond seven stresses. An eight-stress line could be presented much more easily as two tetrameters. Even the septenary,

1. Raymond W. Alden, English Verse, 70, 259.

2. Jakob Schipper, op. cit., pp. 202-204, in passim.

as we have seen, frequently broke into short four-three lines. When the line contains more feet than the ear can take as a rhythmic whole, the poetry is inartistic.

We have already mentioned that the English ear finds the ascending rhythms (iambic and anapestic) more acceptable than others. In the case of meters, the preference lies with the pentameter. A line of less than five feet seems to give a choppy effect, whereas anything longer, gives a line which is too extended to be grasped easily as a unit. An interesting example of a foreign meter's being supplanted by one more agreeable to the English is that of Vergil's Latin hexameters in the Aeneid being translated by the Earl of Surrey (c. 1540) with unrhymed iambic pentameter or blank verse. Chaucer had introduced the decasyllabic line into English poetry, but he had used it rhymed in couplets. Surrey first transformed this meter into blank verse by dispensing with rhyme. Surrey may have been influenced in inventing blank verse by the lack of rhyme in classical verse. Another possibility is that he was following the example of the Italian poet Trissino (1478-1550) who introduced into Italian poetry the rhymeless, eleven-syllabled

verses known as *versi sciolti* (sc. della rima, i.e. freed from rhyme).¹ Surrey may have received the impulse for his new form from classical or Italian sources, but it might also be remembered that Anglo-Saxon poetry was free from rhyme except in its last years. That fact might have helped in conditioning the English mind so that unrhymed poetry could be popular.

Many of our best poets---Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton---have preferred the use of iambic pentameter, rhymed or unrhymed, in their works. Nevertheless, experimentation with foreign forms and invention of new movements have gone on. The combinations possible within the separate divisions of feet and meters go far toward giving variety to poetry. When these two elements are combined with a third---that of rhyme---the possibilities for having numerous delightful patterns become apparent.

III. Stanza: The Combination of Rhythm, Meter, and Rhyme in Regular Pattern

Classification of all the variations of stanza-form would be an almost impossible task. A more sensible pro-

1. Jakob Schipper, op. cit., pp. 219-220, in passim.

cedure is an enumeration of some of the forms which have played a part in English poetry on the basis of number of lines in the stanza.

(a) Couplet or distich: two lines.—Although couplets are much used, they are not often arranged in stanzas. Possetti's "The White Ship" is an exception to this statement.

(b) Tercets: three lines.—The usual three-line stanza is rhymed *aaa*, as is George Herrick's "To Julia", 1648. *Terza rima* (*aba, bcb, etc.*) is built from tercets but is really a scheme of continuous verse rather than a stanza. The form was introduced from the Italian. Chaucer used it for a few lines in his "Complaint to his Lady". Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind", 1819, is in *terza rima*. Another three-line form is the villanelle. In it the middle lines of all the stanzas rhyme as well as the first and third---*aba aba*. The first line of the first stanza is repeated as the last line of all the evenly numbered stanzas, and the last line of the first stanza is repeated as the last line of the odd-numbered stanzas.

(c) Quatrains: four lines.—There are many varieties of rhyme arrangement for stanzas of four lines. The one-rhymed quatrain, *aaaa*, was often found in Middle English poetry. The pattern *aabb* is nothing more than a doubled couplet. The most common rhyme scheme of the early ballads

was abcb. Alternate rhyme, abab, has been much used. Another variation is that of abba which is used by Tennyson in his "In Memoriam". The usual length of the envoy of the ballade form is four lines. The typical rhyme pattern of this half-stanza is bebc. Quatrains are also important as constituents of longer stanzas, particularly the sonnet.

(d) Quintet: five lines.—As stanzas grow in number of lines the possible patterns become more difficult to catalogue. Chaucer, in his "Envoy to Complaint to his Purse" had a five-line stanza rhyming aabba. Other possibilities are aabbb, and aabbbb. Adelaide Crapsey (1878-1914) perfected a five-line stanza which was without rhyme. Her "cinquains", as she called them, were based on syllable-counting. The lines had respectively, two, four, six, eight, and ten syllables each.

(e) Sestet: six lines.—The term sestet usually refers to the last six lines of a sonnet, but in general it denotes any six-line stanza. Popular varieties of the sestet have been aabbcc, ababcc, ababab, and aabaab. Byron used the pattern ababab in "She Walks in Beauty", 1815. Chaucer tried a stanza with the rhymes ababcb in his "Envoy to the Clerkes Tale". Sestets are the basis of one of the most artificial of all forms, the Provençal sestina. The sestina is composed of six stanzas of six lines each. The

rules for its composition are technical in the extreme.

(f) Septet: seven lines.—There are examples of septets with rhymes of abateca and abateeb among others. The most important septet is the rime royal, ababdec, which Chaucer introduced into English. Chaucer also utilized a stanza with the rhyme arrangement of ababbab in a part of "Fortune".

(g) Octave: eight lines.—The first eight lines of a sonnet (Italian) are called an octave. However, any eight-line stanza is an octave. These are some of the common varieties: abababab, ababbaba, ababbcbcb, and ababccdd. Still another eight-line stanza is ottava rima, abababcc, an Italian stanza used by Ariosto and Tasso and introduced into England by Wyatt. The French form which is called the ballade is made up of three stanzas of eight lines each rhyming ababbcbcb and a four-line envoy. For a refrain the last line of the first stanza is used as the concluding line for the other two stanzas and the envoy. The triolet is one of the oldest French forms. It is composed of eight lines usually short and of an anapestic movement. The first line is repeated as the fourth and the first and second as the seventh and eighth---ABAABAB. The rispetto is an Italian form. Usually it consists of eight lines in two quatrains rhyming ababaabb.

(h) The Nine-Line Stanza.—The most important nine-line stanza is the one invented by Spenser and called Spenserian. The Spenserian stanza rhymes ababbec. The last line is an Alexandrine while all the others are pentameter lines. Chaucer had popularized a stanza of eight lines rhyming ababbec in pentameter. Spenser must have invented his form by adding an Alexandrine to the Chaucerian stanza. The Spenserian stanza has been widely used. Among others, the poets Thomson, Shenstone, Beattie, Burns, Byron, Keats, and Shelley have written poems in this stanza. Chaucer introduced two nine-line stanzas. He used the pattern aabaabbab in "Anelida" and aabaabec in the latter part of the "Complaint of Mars".

(i) The Ten-Line Stanza.—Chaucer employed a ten-line stanza, aabaabeddc, in the "Complaint to his Lady". In the "Envoy to the Complaint of Venus" he used a ten-line stanza, aabaabbaab.

(j) The Eleven-Line Stanza.—Swinburne invented an eleven-line stanza which he called a roundel. In A Century of Roundels he has one hundred examples of his skill in this form. Two of the roundel's eleven lines make up a refrain. The rhymes with X as the refrain, are arranged: a-b-a-X b-a-b a-b-a-X. The "chant royal" is an old French form. In reality it is an extended ballade made up of five

instead of three stanzas. These five stanzas each have eleven lines. The envoy consists of five lines. The last line of the first stanza is repeated as the last of the four others and also of the envoy. Only five rhymes are allowed. One of these five must be repeated three times and the other twice in each stanza, to say nothing of the envoy. It can easily be seen that this form is almost impossible in English. However, Austin Dobson, Richard Le Gallienne, Clinton Scollard, and Ion Marquis have written in this form.¹

(k) The Twelve-Line Stanza.—The stanzaic form of the Pearl is the most noteworthy of twelve-line stanzas. This famous stanza form consists of twelve lines of four accents each rhymed according to the scheme ababababbcbc.

(l) The Thirteen-Line Stanza.—The rondeau is a French form which has met with some favor in English. It consists of thirteen iambic lines of eight or ten syllables with only two rhymes. It contains three stanzas, the first and the third of five lines and the second of three lines, and a refrain consisting of the first word or words of the

1. Raymond Alden, op. cit., p. 386.

first line added without rhyming, to anything at the end of the eighth and thirteenth lines. It is a later form than the rondel. The regular arrangement of rhymes in the rondeau is aabbaaabaabba.

(m) The Fourteen-Line Stanza.—By far the most famous of fourteen-line stanzas is the sonnet. There are over a dozen variations of this form. In general, however, there are these three types: (1) the Petrarchan or Italian sonnet which is the strictest of all. It is built on two rhyme-sounds in the octave and three in the sestet. The rhyme scheme in the octave is expressed by the symbols abbaabba while the sestet has either the rhyme arrangement abcabc or ababab. (2) The Shakespearean sonnet was not invented by Shakespeare but was used by him as a model. It is made up of three quatrains concluded by a couplet with a new rhyme. The formula is ababcdcdedefeggg. (3) The Miltonic sonnet, invented by Milton, disregards the thought-break between the octave and the sestet. Milton's sonnets are a gradual culmination of thought rather than the contrast of two ideas. The typical sonnet is written in iambic pentameter lines. Wyatt and Surrey introduced and naturalized the Sonnet, both the true Petrarchian type and the Sonnet which was afterwards carried to such perfection in the hands of Shakespeare and Spenser. It is Surrey who is

given credit for the alteration of the Italian sonnet into an English form. Among Elizabethan poets the sonnet met with particular favor. Series of sonnets called sonnet cycles became the vogue. The best examples of these collections are Sidney's Astrophel and Stella (1591), Daniel's Delia (1592), and Spenser's Amoretti, 1595.

The rondel is also a fourteen line stanza. It is an early form of the rondeau. The rhymes (which, in common with all other French forms, cannot be repeated) are only two and are placed in the following order: ABbaabABabbAa (the capitals indicate that the entire line is repeated intact.)

(n) The Sixteen-Line Stanza.—Chaucer used two stanzas of sixteen lines each in "Anelida". The rhymes were aaabaabbbabbba.

(o) The Seventeen-Line Stanza.—There is a seventeen-line stanza in Spenser's "Epithalamion", 1595, rhymed ababcedcdeffeggh.

(p) The Eighteen-Line Stanza.—Spenser's Epithalamion contains stanzas of eighteen lines rhymed ababcedcdeffggffhh.

(q) The Nineteen-Line Stanza.—Spenser's Epithalamion also contains stanzas of nineteen lines rhymed ababcedcdceffggfhhi.

It has already been commented on that iambic and anapestic rhythms seem to predominate in English poetry. It has been noted also that the pentameter line is favored. When we come to the stanza, we find that we have many varieties that have met the needs of poets. It is not surprising, however, to find that the greater part of poetry which is written in stanzaic-form is composed of units varying from four to nine lines. The most obvious exception is the sonnet, and it is usually regarded as being made up either of an octave and a sestet or three quatrains and a couplet. Here again we find that our sense of unity leads us to prefer a structural form which is of a size adequate to allow for an artistic phrasing of thought and not so large that it fails to strike the ear as a complete whole.

The development of stanza form came as a result of foreign impetus. French and Provençal patterns reached their height from the eleventh to fifteenth centuries. Chaucer, Gower, and a few others imitated the French forms, but it was not until the nineteenth century that they were really used in England. The elaborate rules for construction, the difficulty of imitating French rhyme, and the narrowness of their poetic appeal prevent the French forms from being utilized by any poets who are not skillful

craftsmen. These French forms have undergone very little adaptation. The feeling seems to remain that they are to show a writer's technical brilliance. They make a gay, frivolous appeal with their delicacy and charm, but high-seriousness is not associated with them.

The sonnet made a greater appeal to the English after it had been modified than in its strict imitation of the Italian form. Limiting it to two or three rhyme-sounds made it seem artificial to English taste. Its adaptation was along the lines of greater freedom of rhyme. Of course, some variations of it changed it to a form composed of quatrains and a couplet rather than its original octave and a sestet. The English have not been content to follow the rules laid down by their Italian models.

Summary

1. Roughly speaking, English poets from 925 to 1400 concerned themselves rather generally with experiments in rhyme as a substitute for Anglo-Saxon alliteration as a structural device. The acceptance of rhyme as a structural device would necessitate the substitution of rhyme and meter for cadence and caesura, and the development of a stanza form to take the place of the Anglo-Saxon strophe.

2. The genius and contemporary popularity of Geoffrey Chaucer seem to have committed English poetry to rhyme

rather than alliteration; although the later development of blank verse seems to be an indirect method of preserving the unrhymed line which was so characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon concept of poetic.

3. From about 1333 (Wintot) to 1600, English poets performed an almost infinite number of experiments in rhythm, meter, and rhyme in working out an acceptable stanza form, varying in length from the rhymed couplets of Robert Mannyng of Brunne's Chronicle to Spenser's nineteen-lined stanza in "Epithalamion". Some of the stanzas were original inventions, some were borrowed, and some were adaptations of foreign forms.

4. As a result of all this experimentation, the English ear seems to manifest a decided preference for the iambic or anapestic foot, for the pentameter line, and for a stanza form varying from four to nine lines in length.

CHAPTER IV

SCHOOLS OF POETRY

When a poet appears who is in advance of his time, he is usually imitated. A group of poets who acknowledge such a man as their leader receives the appellation of "A school of poetry". The phrase is equally applicable to a group who set for themselves certain standards and rules of writing, whether they acknowledge one person as the genius of the group or not. Fundamentally, a school of poets is held together by kinship of style, plan, purpose, thought, or subject-matter. One sometimes rather loosely ascribes poets to a school when their poetry has reminded one of that of another poet of importance, even when there has been no direct imitation or conscious following of rules. Frequently, there has been imitation of imitators until the final product bears little resemblance to the productions of the original school. The vagueness that has resulted makes a classification of poetic schools difficult. The basis on which our classification is attempted is that of a substantial reputation in literature, whether that be in the literature of criticism or of creative writing. Thus in

order to be included, a school must have given rise to a body of literature or it must have gained the recognition of critics.

The schools discussed here are the following: the Chaucerian, the courtly makers, the Jonsonian, the Spenserian, the Donne, the Cavalier, the Religious, and the outstanding schools of the "modern" period (1830-1933). Those schools of the "modern" period which have engaged our attention are the pre-Raphaelite, the Aesthetic, the Symbolist, the Realist, the Celtic Revivalist, the Imagist, the War poets, the Naivist, and the Sitwellian. Between the schools which had their beginnings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and those of the "modern" period, we have the domination first of classicism and then of romanticism. These two movements are broader in scope than schools.

I. The Chaucerian School

Chaucer was himself an imitator of French and Italian schools of poetry. Although he borrowed widely of foreign forms and material, he developed a remarkable degree of originality as time went on. The imitators of Chaucer depended more on the artificial French poetry from which Chaucer advanced than on his later originality. Among the chief of Chaucer's followers was the monk, John Lydgate.

His Storie of Thobas is represented by him as being a new Canterbury Tale, told by himself soon after joining the pilgrims at Canterbury. It is based on Boccaccio and Statius. In this work he follows Chaucer in using the ten-syllable rhyming couplet. In his The Falls of Princes he uses the seven-line stanza which is called the "rhyme royal". Lydgate admired Chaucer's language and called him the 'noble rethor poet of Britayne'. While Chaucer gave us a stylistic vocabulary, he chose new and unusual words which were well suited to his artistic needs. But when his imitators, particularly Lydgate, tried to copy Chaucer's verbal innovations, the result was decidedly mechanical. In their use of aureate terms, the group termed the Scottish Chaucerians—King James the First of Scotland, Robert Henryson, Dunbar, Methan, Douglas, and Lyndesay—are imitative of Lydgate more than they are of Chaucer.¹ James I uses the seven-line stanza, ababbcc, in his King's Quair. Thomas Occleve was one of Chaucer's imitators who possibly knew Chaucer personally. At least he mourned him deeply. Many of these men paid poetic tribute to Chaucer.

1. Pierrepont H. Nichols, "Lydgate's Influence on the Aureate Terms of the Scottish Chaucerians", Publications of the Modern Language Association, XLVII, 532.

II. The Courtly Makers

We are made cognizant of this group of poets by the following excerpt from George Puttenham's The Arte of English Poesie (1589):

a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyatt th' elder and Henry Earle of Surrey were the two chieftaines, who hauing trauniled into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately measures and stile of the Italian Poesie, as nouices newly crept out of the schooles of Dante, Arioste, and Petrarch, they greatly polished our rude and homely maner of vulgar Poesie from that it had bene before, and for that cause may justly be sayd the first reformers of our English metre and stile.¹

The courtly-makers were imbued with the spirit of the Renaissance. They had a feeling for the lyrical and an appreciation of form that led them to imitate the Italian and the French. A familiarity with Vergil, Martial, Seneca, Petrarch, Ariosto and the Court-of-Love ideals is at once apparent in their works. Wyatt deserves to be mentioned as our first classical satirist. In his Horatian satires he used terza rima. Surrey translated Vergil's Aeneid and in so doing used blank verse, or unrhymed iambic pentameter lines, for the first time in English. Wyatt and Surrey together introduced the sonnet which Surrey

1. John Buchan, A History of English Literature, p. 72.

altered to an English form consisting of three quatrains and a couplet, rather than the octave and sestet characteristic of the Italian. Thomas Sackville, known for his collaboration with Norton in writing Gorboduc, the first regular English tragedy, in blank verse, felt the influence of Wyatt and Surrey. Gascoigne, Sidney, Iyer, and Raleigh are among those for whom Italian and French forms and courtly ideals assumed great prominence.

III. The Spenserian School

Edmund Spenser published his Shepherd's Calendar in 1579 and began the publishing of his Faerie Queen in 1590. These, along with his Epithalamion and Prothalamion and his sonnet series, Amoretti, furnished ample material for the inspiration and models of later poets. The elements which characterize the Spenserian school can be pointed out quite readily. (1) There was the allegorical element which was, of course, nothing new to English poetry; but Spenser gave it special significance by his addition of political and ecclesiastical allegory to the moral allegory that had been a feature of English poetry from the time of Langland. (2) From Theocritus, Bion, Mantuanus, Clement Marot, on through the Englishmen Alexander Barclay and Barnaby Rudge, the tradition of the pastoral element as found in singing matches, dirges, and panegyrics, descended to Spenser. The

typical subject-matter of Spenserian pastoralists consisted of grief over the loss of shepherd friends (panegyric); idyllic love; praise of the poetic muse; description of the charm of English hills, woods, and streams; personal hopes and fears; denunciation of the moral laxity of the times; and references in allegorical fashion to church, state, and poets. (3) Spenser's stanza-patterns, to which references have been made in a previous chapter, were elaborate and melodic. Imitations and adaptations of the Spenserian stanza, which is the one used in the Faerie Queene, have been particularly widespread. In the Spenserian revival of the eighteenth century alone there are said to be at least ninety-one poems by fifty-nine authors written in some definite imitation of the Spenserian stanza. A few of the more famous of the eighteenth century users of the Spenserian stanza are James Thomas, Shenstone, Akenside, Prior, Beattie, and Robert Burns. It is strange that some of the poets and critics of that century, especially Shenstone and Johnson, felt that the Spenserian stanza was a more suitable medium for light than for serious verse. In the nineteenth century Byron and Keats were the most outstanding exponents of this stanza. (4) Spenser's diction was sometimes archaic, sometimes rustic, and sometimes "he writ no language", but in any case the quality of

quaintness was consciously striven for. In order to give an atmosphere of antiquity, he used words like "oftsoon", "wight", "eyn", "shend", and "hight". Frequently he coined words, such as "mercify". (5) The descriptions of nature to be found in Spenser and his followers are rich and sensuous in the extreme. (6) In slow-moving pageantry, heightened decoration, and languorous air, the Spenserians are difficult to match.

Among the imitators of Spenser, though not always of his school to the exclusion of all other schools, we find Sidney, Drayton, Giles Fletcher, William Drummond, William Browne, George Wither, Phineas Fletcher, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, and Robert Herrick.

The Spenserian Revival which took place in the eighteenth century—along with Addison's, Percy's, and Warton's interest in the ballad, and MacPherson's and Chatterton's interest in the Celtic—may well have been a part of that century's interest in old things. The Spenserian tradition was not to be lost sight of. Lamb called Spenser "the poet's poet", and from sheer number of imitators, he appears to have deservedly earned the title.

IV. The Jonsonian School

The personality of Ben Jonson gave vigorous backing to the literary ideals which he held. Classicism was the dominant note of his credo. He believed in the use of

established classic forms; as for instance, odes, satires, epigrams, and panegyrics. His school delighted in use of conventional settings like the classic garden. In their cool, intellectual, disciplined, almost academic, attitude toward life, the Jonsonians followed their master. Those of the tribe of Ben sought after a graceful and finished literary style characterized by restraint, simplicity, and craftsmanship. With all these qualities they blended a respect, which even mounted to reverence for the past, because it had stood the test of time.

Numbered among the disciples of Jonson we find Herrick, Suckling, Cleveland, Carverright, and Rutter. Following Jonson in the usage of classical forms, we have William Browne, George Wither, Edmund Waller, Abraham Cowley, Andrew Marvell, John Milton, Samuel Butler, John Oldham, and John Dryden. Herrick twice pays graceful tribute to Jonson in verse; once in "His Prayer to Ben Jonson" and once in "An Ode for Him".

V. The Donne School

Since the time of Samuel Johnson the poets of the Donne school have been called the 'metaphysical' poets, although Johnson was not altogether accurate when he styled them so. The characteristics which mark this school are (1) an antagonistic attitude toward the Elizabethan Court-

of-Love conventions; (2) a fondness for extravagant and ingenious figures, no matter how fantastic and distorted, if original; (3) an expression in verse of a metaphysical interpretation of social ideas; (4) experiments in rhythm--- attempts to discover appropriate rhythms for each individual thought; (5) an intellectual romanticism; (6) and an intellectual subtlety that manifests itself in unexpected turns of thought. Included in the metaphysical poets along with Donne are Herbert, Waller, Penham, Cowley, Vaughan, Tavenant, Marvell, and Crashaw. Among those who laughed at the Elizabethan conceits, we find Wither, Carew, and Suckling. Poems with metaphysical interpretations were written by Suckling, Lovelace, Herbert, and Sedley. In Herbert and Sedley, we notice examples of experiment in rhythm. The figures of George Herbert and of Edmund Waller are extravagant and ingenious, to say the least. Some of the poets listed in the Donne school are conspicuous followers of other schools in other portions of their poetry.

VI. The Cavalier Poets

The Cavalier school appears in an age in which the Puritan spirit is dominant. The gallant and trivial Cavalier poetry reflects a life that is carefree, loose, gay, and sophisticated. The medium used consists of grace-

ful and melodic stanza patterns that have a classic finish. The Cavalier thought expressed through this medium is sensual, frivolous, insincere, and frequently on the verge of indecency. In spite of these qualities, or more probably because of them, the Cavalier poets make delightful reading. The poems of Thomas Carew, Robert Herrick, Sir John Suckling, and Richard Lovelace are among the best known in our language. Poems in the Cavalier vein have also been written by Abraham Cowley, John Wilmot, Andrew Marvell, Charles, Sackville, and Sir Charles Sedley.

VII. The Religious Poets

In the poetry of the Religious school there gleams the Anglican beauty of holiness by the side of the Puritan assurance of personal communion. There is a pervading sense that the spiritual will triumph over the worldly. The religious poets seem to possess a mystic insight into the spiritual world. Transcendentalism is a keynote of their philosophy. Buoyed up by these foregoing aspects in their rapturous confidence in Divine protection.

George Wither, Robert Herrick, George, Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, and Thomas Traherne belong to the school of the Religious poets. Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, and Traherne were more consistently religious than Wither or Herrick. Herbert wrote The Temple. Crashaw

reached lyric heights in The Flaming Heart. Vaughan's poetry in Silex Scintillans probably inspired some of the mysticism of Blake and Wordsworth. Thomas Traherne's Poems of Felicity are forerunners of Wordsworth's "Ode on Intimations of Immortality".

VIII. Classicism

The influence of Latin and Greek have been with us since the Anglo-Saxon period. We have noted how Latin was the literary language, particularly of monks and priests, in that early period. The Middle English poet Gower wrote one of his chief works, Vox Clamantis, in Latin. During the Renaissance period the humanists---More, Erasmus, Colet, Ascham, and others---founded classical scholarship in England. These men were of an intellectual and critical bent rather than of the creative. Through their influence the universities passed the classical training on to young men.

Gabriel Harvey, who followed Ascham in his contempt for rhyming, even went so far as to try to persuade Spenser to write poetry dependent on quantity rather than stress. Classical prosody has quantity as its distinguishing characteristic. However, neither Harvey nor others who tried to reform English versification to meet classical standards in this respect were ever successful. Yet the attempt to introduce quantity reveals an interest in the

classics of far greater authenticity than anything which we have in the period that is called the classical age of English literature.

The period designated as classic, or pseudo-classic, lasted from the middle of the seventeenth century to the middle of the eighteenth. Critics have pointed out that it was more Latin than Greek, and more French than Latin. Professor Henry A. Beers testifies to the powerful influence of France upon English literary fashions in the latter half of the seventeenth century:

...by the middle of the seventeenth century the renaissance schools of poetry had become effects in all European countries. They had run into extravagances of style, into a vicious manner known in Spain as Gongorism, in Italy as Marinism, and in England best exhibited in the verse of Donne and Cowley and the rest of the group whom Dr. Johnson called the metaphysical poets, and whose Gothicism of taste Addison ridiculed in his Spectator papers on true and false wit. It was France that led the reform against the fashion. Malherbe and Boileau insisted upon the need of discarding tawdy ornaments of style and cultivating simplicity, clearness, propriety, decorum, moderation; above all, good sense. The new Academy, founded to guard the purity of the French language, lent its weight to precepts of the critics, who applied the rules of Aristotle, as commented by Longinus and Horace, to modern conditions.¹

The English critics---Pennis, Langbaine, Rymer, Gildon and others---took the law as given by the Frenchmen Boileau,

1. Henry A. Beers, A History of Romanticism, pp. 37-38.

Racine, Le Bossu, Rapin, and Bonhours and passed it on to the English. The three writers who were outstanding for their period---Dryden, Addison, and Johnson, of three successive ages---consolidated the body of literary opinion.

In the passage quoted from Beers, we find qualities which help us in characterizing the period. A desire to excel in simplicity, clearness, propriety, decorum, moderation, and good sense animated the literary men of the time. Their classicism consisted in a tendency toward objectivity and a lack of curiosity. Coldness of feeling and tameness of imagination were attributes of the poetic works. No new experience was sought. Poets were content to systematize and generalize on the accumulated knowledge of the past. The literature reflected urban social life as seen in the court, the salons, the clubs, and the coffee-houses. Respect for authority manifested itself in establishment of rules, in an attempt to find a formula of correctness for the arts, and in the erection of canons of composition.

The chief vehicles of poetic expression were satires, burlesque, and travesty. John Oldham modelled his satires on Horace, Juvenal, and Boileau. Samuel Butler's Hudibras (1662), aimed against Puritan failings, was immensely popular. Dryden excelled in satire as in adequately shown by his Absalom and Achitophel and his MacFlecknoe.

Alexander Pope's writings are characteristic of his age. In youth he modelled his pastorals along classical lines. His following of Horace and the French critics is exemplified in his An Essay on Criticism (1711). He translated the Iliad and the Odyssey according to ideals of correctness and elegance of the eighteenth century. Pope brought the form of the rhymed or heroic couplet to mechanical perfection. In the classical period Waller was considered to be the first correct English versifier, because of his handling of the couplet, but it was Pope who utilized it to the fullest of its possibilities. The rhymed couplet was so extensively used during his day that other forms were of minor importance. The sonnet disappeared until about the middle of the eighteenth century. Except for dramatic poetry, the Restoration critics thought blank verse too "low" for a poem of heroic dimensions.

This is curious, that rhyme, a mediæval invention, should have been associated in the last century with the classical school of poetry; while blank verse, the nearest English equivalent of the language of Attic tragedy, was a shibboleth of romanticizing poets, like Thomson and Akenside. The reason was twofold: rhyme came stamped with the authority of the French tragic alexandrine; and secondly, it meant constraint where blank verse meant freedom, "ancient liberty, recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming."¹

1. Henry A. Beers, op. cit., p. 52.

Today we look somewhat with disfavor upon the extent to which the pseudo-classicists used the rhymed couplet. We deplore their narrowness in judging blank verse. Yet the classic period had its excellencies as well as its shortcomings. Of its commendable features we must always remember its clearness, simplicity, and good sense.

IX. Romanticism

Classicism as a literary term is referential not independent. By implication we must arrive at a consideration of romanticism. Many points of contrast between the two have been discussed by critics. Romanticism has been said to consist in the reproduction of the life and thought of the Middle Ages in modern art or literature. When we consider that the work of the mediæval poets were marked by an excess of sentiment, over-lavish decoration, a strong sense of color and a feeble sense of form, an attention to detail at the cost of the main impression, and a tendency to run into the exaggerated and grotesque, we know something of what to expect in the romantic. Pater defines the romantic character in art as consisting in "the addition of strangeness to beauty". The three words---individualism, sensitivity, and imagination---go far toward suggesting the dominant aspects of romanticism. Elements which are continually encountered in the writings of romantic poets are

(1) the doctrine of the worth of the common man, (2) love of nature, (3) fondness for the romantic past, (4) terror or Gothicism, and (5) speculation. Whereas the classic period has often been criticized for being too mundane, the romantic period has as frequently been censured for being too transcendental. The earthy realism of the classicists contrasts sharply with the misty idealism of the romanticists.

Although the romantic period is in general said to occupy the latter part of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth century, there were poets writing in the vein of the new movement before 1750. Thomas Parnell published his "A Night Piece on Death" in 1722, John Iyer's "Grongar Hill" came out in 1726, and James Thomson's The Seasons met the public eye in 1730. In "A Night Piece on Death" we have an early representative of the graveyard school---a school which reaches the height of popularity in Thomas Gray's "Elegy; Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751). Iyer's "Grongar Hill" is a piece of landscape painting and for that reason has something in common with Thomson's The Seasons. The early romanticists included besides those already mentioned Edward Young, William Collins, and Joseph Warton.

In Cowper, Crabbe, and Burns there is manifested a

concern over the poverty-stricken peasant that is very characteristic of the period as a whole. Burns gives eloquent expression to the doctrine of the worth of the common man in his "A Man's A Man for A' That". The social and political conditions of man found expression in poetry. French philosophy profoundly affected English poets. The high estimate which had been put upon authority by the classicists was revolted against by the romanticists.

The three names---Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey---are usually spoken of together as comprising the chief middle romanticists. Wordsworth exemplified in all its grandeur the romantic love for nature. With the help of his forceful imagination Coleridge infused poetic charm into a revival of the Gothic element of the supernatural. Southey, although he lacked the poetic stature of Wordsworth and Coleridge, showed his romanticism by using oriental tales as inspiration for his Thalaba the Destroyer and the Curse of Kehama.

Byron, Shelley, and Keats are the later romanticists. Byron typifies romanticism to some people because his life was full of unconventional happenings. There is a wild and exotic tang to much that he has written. The lyrical beauty of Shelley recommends itself to the vast majority of poetry lovers. Shelley's desire was to be one with nature.

Nowhere is this better expressed than in his "Ode to the West Wind". In Keats we find a poetic kinship with Spenser that is discernible in other ways than his use of the Spenserian stanza in his "The Eve of St. Agnes". The sensuous beauty, the air of antiquity, the melodious quality of the poems of Keats were also characteristic of Spenser's. Keats was a worshipper of ideal beauty, and it is from him that we gain the immortal lines,

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"---that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

X. Schools of the Modern Period

A. The Pre-Raphaelites.---It is necessary to define what we mean by pre-raphaelite:

This term, which means simply Italian painters before Raphael, is generally applied to an artistic movement in the middle of the nineteenth century. The term was first used by a brotherhood of German artists who worked together in the convent of San Isidoro, in Rome, with the idea of restoring art to its mediæval purity and simplicity. The term now generally refers to a company of seven young men,---Jante Gabriel Rossetti and his brother William, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, James Collinson, Frederick George Stevens, and Thomas Woolner,---who formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848. Their official literary organ was called The Germ, in which much of the early work of Morris and Rossetti appeared. They took for their models the early Italian painters who, they declared were "simple, sincere, and religious". Their purpose was to encourage simplicity and naturalness in art and literature; and one of their chief objects, in the face of doubt and materialism, was to express the "wonder, rever-

ence, and awe" which characterizes medieval art.¹

Untermeyer characterizes the group as follows:

That band of painters and poets who called themselves quaintly the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood hurried and demise of Victorianism. Their work was a continual denial of its form; their poems aspired to be paintings, their paintings poems. Under the leadership of William Morris, the Pre-Raphaelites enlisted the cooperation of Burne-Jones, the Rossettis and the insecure loyalty of Swinburne. Morris, the most practical member of the group, sought to make over an entire culture; he designed everything from chintzes to stained-glass windows, created furniture, wrought iron, printed books, manufactured glass, needlework, tapestries, tools---all as a protest against the rapid commercialism of a period whose prosperity was essentially shoddy.²

We might almost say that the working-out of an artistic idealism overshadows everything else for the pre-Raphaelites.

B. The Aesthetic School.—Oscar Wilde drawing on the philosophy of Walter Pater attempted to make the 'Nineties declare their esthetic independence. One of his tenets, that beauty is its own excuse for being, was derived from the French symbolists. Wilde passionately believed in 'Art for Arts' sake. The Yellow Book, appearing from 1894 to 1897, was the organ for the group. The Rhymers Club, among whose members were Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson, Victor Plarr, Arthur Symonds, John Davidson, and W.B. Yeats, com-

1. William Long, English Literature, p. 463.

2. Louis Untermeyer, Modern British Poetry, p. 8.

prised the nucleus of the revolt. In Wilde's mind at least the dominant note was that of neopaganism. The school was doomed to fall soon from the sheer weight of its exoticism, its snobbishness, and its decadence. Most of the followers of Wilde finally found an individuality for themselves not dependent on artificial extravagances.

C. The Symbolists.—The symbolists see in the commonplace details of life a significance beyond fact. The psychic or the spiritual is included in their poetic realm. Coventry Patmore, the author of The Angel in the House, exalts symbolism above other poetic devices. Francis Thompson often known as the Catholic poet, reminds one of the metaphysical poets, Donne and Herbert. "The Hound of Heaven", Thompson's highest achievement, has been more widely appreciated than any other religious poem for a century. Stephen Phillips was widely known as a symbolist poet and as a poetic playwright, but his reputation has declined to a great extent. The symbolists employed many images. Their use of an ornate and artificial diction frequently amounted to a fault.

D. The Realists.—The group termed the realists comes closer in the accommodation of the forms of verse to the treatment of present reality than any other of the modern schools. William Ernest Henley could not endure the art of

the aesthetes---an art which was so out of touch with the world. He became the pioneer of a group that considered the rawness and rigor of life, the dangers and the difficulties, of as much importance in making poetry a living medium, as the appeals of beauty. While not always Henly's disciples, the following poets found in experiences of their own day---experiences not always far from brutality and violence---the necessary subject-matter of poetry: A.E. Housman, John Masefield, W.W. Gibson, and Thomas Hardy. It can not be said that this collection of writers preferred any one poetic form: Henly wrote sonnets, verse in imitation of old French forms, and unrhymed poetry; Housman wrote in a simple lyrical strain, making frequent use of quotations and couplets; Masefield has written ballads and long narrative poems, his The Widow in the Bye Street being in the rhyme royal stanza of Chaucer. While much of Hardy's verse challenges us by its roughness, his surface crudities are aimed at producing that particular effect. In addition he has written many delicate and charming lyrics. These poets, then, were not alike in the choice of their forms, but they met on the common ground of writing the poetry of experience.

B. The Celtic Revival.---William Butler Yeats published his Wanderings of Oisín in 1889. In the same year

Douglas Hyde brought out his Book of Gaelic Stories. Thus was the Celtic revival begun. Included in the fellowship of the Celtic poets in addition to Yeats and Hyde were "AE" (George Russell), Mairé O'Neill, James Stephens, Seumas O'Sullivan, Francis Ledwidge, Padraic Colum, Lionel Johnson, Katherine Tynan, and John Millington Synge. Their desire to create a national art kindled some to utilize old Gaelic lays in their works and others to revive the Gaelic language. No doubt the Celtic revival, as many another literary trend before it, grew out of conditions of social and internal conflict. It is indeed true that the interests of Irish culture were the unifying bonds of the group. The literature which has resulted reflects dreams, politics, heroism, hopelessness, and mysticism--- all typically Irish.

F. The Imagists.---The Imagists more than almost any other group had definite ideas of what poetry should be and how to write it.

Imagism defined poetry as the presentation of a visual situation in the fewest possible concrete words, lightened of adjectives and conventional phrasing, unhampered by any sort of moralizing or speculation as to the philosophic significance of the visual idea. Form and rhythm develop with the poem, and are not superimposed upon it; rhyme and metre depend upon the judgment of the author. Traditional poets exemplary in these

respects were held to be Sappho, Catullus, Villon, Dante, Heine, and Chaucer.¹

Ezra Pound and "H.D." (Hilda Doolittle), although both Americans, are closely bound up with the Imagist group in England. Richard Aldington is conceded to be one of the foremost Imagist poets. Aldington was one of the most enthusiastic of vers libristes, but of late he has frequently chosen regular rhythms and fixed forms. Gordon Bottomley in his Chambers of Imagery, First Series (1907), Second Series (1912), anticipated the effects of the Imagists before that group had created a school. D.H. Lawrence who is best known through his novels associated himself with the Imagists in his Amores (1916).

G. The War Poets.—The World War was a stimulus to more than one poet or would-be poet. After the first halo of romanticism had vanished, bitter disillusionment began to figure in the poetry of young men who were in contact with the horrors of warfare. Siegfried Sassoon passionately protested against militarism. The war provided themes for W.W. Gibson, Rupert Brooke, Robert Graves, Wilfred Owen,

1. William Moody and Robert Lovett, A History of English Literature, p. 491.

Robert Nichols, Isaac Rosenberg, Edmund Blunden, Herbert Read, and Charles Hamilton Sorley. Many of the poems of these men, with the exception of Rupert Brooke's, are written in a strain of uncompromising realism.

II. The Naivists.—Gracefulness and delicacy characterize the poetry of the naivist school. More than likely the reaction from the World War was responsible for some poets' feeling that simplicity of thought and childlike utterance were more important than intellectual caviling. Walter de la Mare, author of Peacock Pie, is the most prominent of the naivists, but James Stephens and William Henry Davies have also written poetry of which the outstanding charm is its naivete.

I. The Sitwellian School.—Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell Sitwell, although they present some marked differences, have yet a common background and purpose. They are in revolt against established popular poetry. Their poetry is intellectualized and self-conscious. It is interesting to note that the three are defenders of the baroque and rococo in art. Edith Sitwell favors certain poetic devices such as the use of run-on lines, the transfer of sense---reference to sounds by color adjectives or to light in terms of tactile values---and a use of certain striking words, figures, and phrases in more than one poem.

Osbert Sitwell is more conventional than his sister. His work concerns itself chiefly with criticism of society. Sacheverell Sitwell, the youngest of the three, achieves literary effects as much through his usage of material from the past as from innovations of the present. There is a cubistic quality about that portion of his work in which he telescopes his images. Occasionally his poetry is as brittle and bright as his sister's.

Interpretation

The modern schools illustrate to some extent the individualism of our present day civilization in that an extraordinary amount of experiments have been tried. We have broken with the tradition which grew up after the Anglo-Saxon period that poetry as such must have rhyme or regular meter. Free verse is now considered as an acceptable and pleasing medium. Instead of supplanting the established forms, it has taken its place by their side with the effect of giving the poet a greater variety from which to choose. The tendency to go to the Orient or to the primitives for new forms and inspiration is too recent to be estimated. The barriers of distance and inaccessibility have largely vanished so that a technique of poetry which was formerly the possession of one people now has a possibility of becoming known the world over.

The reader has perhaps noticed the absence from this category of schools of some of the shining geniuses of our literature. This is not to be wondered at when we consider that a school in its anxiety to revolt from the poetic excesses which accrue over a period of time goes to an extreme in emphasizing some point or other in its own poetic creed. Since the greatest poets have shown a breadth of appeal in their work, it follows that they can not be partisans of a single school. Although we give our highest regard to a fine sense of proportion, yet we must not overlook the contributions which schools have made in discarding worn-out devices and adornments and in cutting new channels for poetry to flow in.

CHAPTER V

DEFINITIONS OF POETRY

I. English Definitions

Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word Mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth: to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture.

Sir Phillip Sidney, Apology for Poetry, c. 1585 from R. P. Cowl, The Theory of Poetry in England, p. 42.¹

Poetry is not debarred from any matter which may be expressed by pen or speech.

W. Webbe, Discourse of English Poetry, 1586. Cowl, p. 157.

The right use of poetry is...to mingle profit with pleasure, and so to delight the reader with pleasantness of his art, as in the meantime his mind may be well instructed with knowledge and wisdom.

W. Webbe, A Discourse of English Poetry, 1586. Cowl, p. 302.

Poesy ought not to be employed upon any unworthy matter and subject, nor used to vain purposes.

G. Puttenham, Art of English Poesy, 1589. Cowl, p. 157.

This science Poesy in his perfection cannot grow but by some divine instinct---the Platonicks call it furor; or by excellency of nature and complexion; or by great subtilty of the spirite and wit; or by much experience and observation of the world and course of kind; or, peradventure, by all or most part of them.

G. Puttenham, Art of English Poesy, 1589. Cowl, p. 3.

1. R. P. Cowl, The Theory of Poetry in England, p. 42.

Hereafter any reference to Cowl will be given immediately after the quotation as "Cowl, p. ".

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

W. Shakespeare, Midsummer Night's Dream, 1600. Cowl, p. 5.

Poesy...doth truly refer to the imagination, which,
being not tied to the laws of matter, may at pleasure join
that which Nature hath severed, and sever that which Nature
hath joined.....It is...FEIGNED HISTORY.

F. Bacon, Advancement of Learning, 1605. Cowl, p. 5.

Poetry and picture are arts of a like nature, and both
are busy about imitation.

B. Jonson, Discoueries, 1620-1635. Cowl, p. 43.

The soul must be filled with bright and delightful
ideas, when it undertakes to communicate delight to others,
which is the main end of poesy....

A. Cowley, Preface to Poems, 1656. Cowl, p. 12.

Not without cause, therefore, some both Italian and
Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rhyme both in
longer and shorter works, as have also long since our best
English tragedies, as a thing of itself, to all judicious
ears, trivial and of no true musical delight; which con-
sists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and
the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another,
not in the jingling sound of like endings---a fault avoided
by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory.
John Milton, Paradise Lost: The Verse, 1660. Evert Hordecai
Clark, English Literature: The Seventeenth Century, p. 282.¹

Poesy must resemble natural truth, but it must be
ethical.

J. Dryden, Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy, 1668.
Cowl, p. 85.

1. Evert Hordecai Clark, English Literature: The
Seventeenth Century, p. 282.

Delight is the chief, if not the only, end of poesy; instruction can be admitted but in the second place, for poesy only instructs as it delights.

J. Dryden, Defence of an Essay of Dramatic Poesy, 1668. Cowl, p. 303.

Poetry has no life, nor can have any operation, without probability; it may indeed amuse the people, but moves not the wise, for whom alone (according to Pythagoras) it is ordained.

T. Rymer, Preface to Rapin, 1674. Cowl, p. 90.

I believe the end of all poetry is to please.

T. Rymer, Tragodies of the Last Age, 1678. Cowl, p. 304.

He is a poet,
Who vainly anguishes my breast,
Provoked, allays, and with false terror fills,
Like a magician, and now sets me down
In Thebes, and now in Athens.

--Horace.

Sir W. Temple, Of Poetry, 1690. Cowl, p. 55.

Poetry requires ornament; and that is not to be had from our old Teuton monosyllables: therefore, if I find any elegant word in a classic author, I propose it to be naturalized, by using it myself; and, if the public approves of it, the bill passes.

J. Dryden, Dedication of the Aeneis, 1697. Cowl, p. 194

Poetry is either an art, or whimsey and fanaticism.

J. Dennis, Grounds of Criticism in Poetry, 1704. Cowl, p. 55.

Poetry taken in its most general sense, cannot with strict propriety be called an art of imitation.

E. Burke, On the Sublime and the Beautiful, 1756. Cowl, p. 45.

The business of a poet...is to examine, not the individual but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances.

S. Johnson, Passelas, 1759. Cowl, p. 110

The art of poetry is..., universally, the art of pleasing;

B. Hurd, On the Idea of Universal Poetry, 1766. Cowl, p. 65.

Poetry is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason.
S. Johnson, Lives of the Poets (Milton), 1779-1781, cowl, p. 304.

The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights.
S. Johnson, Lives of the Poets (Waller), 1779-1781. Cowl, p. 26.

Rhyme, Milton says, and says truly, is no necessary adjunct of true poetry. But perhaps, of poetry as a mental operation, metre or music is no necessary adjunct; it is however by the music of metre that poetry has been discriminated in all languages.
S. Johnson, Lives of the Poets (Milton), 1779-1781. Cowl, p. 227.

The end of poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure.
Cunliffe, Pyre, Young. p. 512. Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 1800 from Cunliffe, Pyre, and Young's Century Readings in English Literature, p. 512.¹

It may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.
Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 1800. C., P., and Y., p. 507.

Poetry is the image of man and nature.
Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 1800. C., P., and Y., p. 508.

Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science.
Wordsworth, Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 1800. C., P., and Y., p. 510.

1. J.W. Cunliffe, J.F.A. Pyre, and Karl Young, Century Readings in English Literature, p. 512. Hereafter as "C., P., and Y., p. 510."

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity:

Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 1800-1805. Cowl, p. 28.

Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge---it is as immortal as the heart of man.

Preface to Lyrical Ballads, 1802. Cowl, p. 171.

Poetry produces two kinds of pleasure, one for each of the two master-movements and impulses of man, the gratification of the love of variety and the gratification of the love of uniformity---and that by a recurrence delightful as a painless and yet exciting act of memory---tiny breezelets of surprise, each one destroying the ripples which the former had made---yet all together keeping the surface of the mind in a bright dimple-smile.

S. T. Coleridge, Anima Poetae, 1805. Cowl, p. 305.

No one can stand pre-eminent as a great poet, unless he has not only a heart susceptible of the most pathetic or most exalted feelings of nature, but an eye attentive to, and familiar with, every external appearance that she may exhibit, in every change of season, every variation of light and shade, every rock, every tree, every leaf, in her solitary places.

W. L. Bowles, Poetic Character of Pope, 1806. Cowl, p. 111.

The appropriate business of poetry, (which, nevertheless, if genuine, is as permanent as pure science,) her appropriate employment, her privilege and her duty, is to treat of things not as they are, but as they appear; not as they exist in themselves, but as they seem to exist to the senses, and to the passions.

Wordsworth, Essay Supplementary to Preface, 1815. Cowl, p. 73.

...two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination.

S. T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria. 1817. C., P., and Y., p. 550.

The poet...brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it

were) fuses, each into each by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination.

S. T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, 1817. C., P., and Y., p. 553.

Finally, good sense is the body of poetic genius, fancy its drapery, motion its life, and imagination the soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

S. T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, 1817. C., P., and Y., p. 553.

A poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference, therefore, must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object proposed.

S. T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria. 1817. C., P., and Y., p. 551.

The proper and immediate object of Science is the acquirement or communication of truth; the proper and immediate object of Poetry is the communication of pleasure...I wish our clever young poets would remember my homely definitions of prose and poetry; that is, prose: words in their best order; poetry: the best words in the best order.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge from Louis Untermeyer, The Forms of Poetry, 111.

A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part.

S. T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria. 1817. C., P., and Y., p. 552.

1. Louis Untermeyer, "The Forms of Poetry, 111. Hereafter as "Untermeyer, p. ".

I adopt with full faith the principles of Aristotle, that poetry as poetry is essentially ideal, that it avoids and excludes all accident; that its apparent individualities of rank, character, or occupation must be representative of a class...

S. T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, 1817. Cowl, p. 78.

This I must say, that poetry, as distinguished from other modes of composition, does not rest in metre, and that it is not poetry, if it makes no appeal to our passions.

S. T. Coleridge, Lectures, 1818. Cowl, p. 234.

Poetry, then, is an imitation of nature, but the imagination and the passions are a part of man's nature... W. Hazlitt, The English Poets, 1818. Cowl, p. 81.

Poetry is a passion, because it seeks the deepest impressions; and because it must undergo in order to convey them. It is a passion for truth....It is a passion for beauty....It is a passion for power....It embodies and illustrates its impressions by imagination or images of the objects of which it treats....It illustrates them by fancy....It modulates what it utters, because in running the whole round of beauty it must needs include beauty of sound; and because, in the height of its enjoyment, it must show the perfection of its triumph, and make difficulty itself become part of its facility and joy. Leigh Hunt, An Answer to the Question 'What Is Poetry?' pp. 2-3.

Poetry, strictly and artistically so called, that is to say, considered not merely as poetic feeling, which is more or less shared by all the world, but as the operation of that feeling, such as we see it in the poet's book, is the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty, and power, embodying and illustrating its conceptions by imagination and fancy, and modulating its language on the principle of variety in uniformity. Its means are whatever the universe contains; and its ends, pleasure and exaltation.

Leigh Hunt, An Answer to the Question 'What Is Poetry?' p.1.

The language of poets has ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry.

P. B. Shelley, Defence of Poetry, 1821. Cowl, pp. 153-154.

It is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence....My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarize the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, Preface to Prometheus Unbound, 1820
from John Buchan, A History of English Literature, p. 434.¹

We hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us.
Poetry should be great and unobtrusive.
John Keats. Buchan, p. 433

With a great poet the sense of beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration.
John Keats, Letter to his brother. Buchan, p. 433.

A pretty sonnet may be written on a larkkin or a parsnip....but a great poet must clasp the higher passions breast-high, and compel them in an authoritative tone to answer his interrogatories.
Walter Savage Landor, Pentameron, II. Buchan, p. 442.

We may write little things well....but never will any be justly called a great poet unless he has treated a great subject worthily.
Walter Savage Landor, Pentameron, IV. Buchan, p. 438.

It is the very essence of poetry to present, not abstract propositions to the intellect, but concrete real truth to the senses, the affections,---to the whole man, in short.
G. Brimley, Tennyson's Poems, 1855. Cowl, p. 80

1. John Buchan, A History of English Literature, p. 434.
Hereafter as "Buchan, p."

Aristotle's celebrated dictum of poetry being an "imitative art"....is....false....Poetry is substitutive and suggestive, not imitative; words, not images, are employed.

G. H. Lewes, Inner Life of Art, 1868.

Cowl, p. 47.

Verses is the form of poetry; not the form as a thing arbitrary, but as a thing vital and essential; it is the incarnation of poetry....Rhythm is not a thing invented by man, but a thing evolved from him, and it is not merely the accidental form, but the only possible form of poetry; for there is a rhythm of feeling correspondent in the human soul.

G. H. Lewes, Inner Life of Art, 1868.

Cowl, p. 238.

The office of poetry is not moral instruction, but moral emulation; not doctrine, but inspiration.

G. H. Lewes, Inner Life of Art, 1868.

Cowl, p. 312.

Poetry is both an imitative and an imaginative art.

F. W. H. Myers, Essay on Virgil, 1879.

Cowl, p. 49.

More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us.

M. Arnold, Introduction to Ward's English Poets, 1880.

Cowl, p. 312.

But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact.

Matthew Arnold, The Study of Poetry, 1880. C., P., and Y., p. 823.

Those laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty fix as an essential condition, in the poet's treatment of such matters as are here in question, high seriousness;--the high seriousness which comes from absolute sincerity.

Matthew Arnold, The Study of Poetry. 1880. C., P., and Y., p. 835.

II. American Definitions

A poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul.

E. A. Poe, The Poetic Principle, 1844.

Cowl, p. 257.

It is not metres, but a metre-making argument, that

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makes a poem---a thought so passionate and alive, that, like the spirit of a plant or an animal, it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing. R. W. Emerson, The Poet, 1844. Cowl, p. 237.

If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?--- Emily Dickinson Untermyer, 111.

Poetry is a language that tells us, through a more or less emotional reaction, something that cannot be said. All poetry, great or small, does this. And it seems to me that poetry has two outstanding characteristics. One is that it is, after all, undefinable. The other is that it is eventually unmistakable. Edwin Arlington Robinson Untermyer, 111.

It is absurd to think that the only way to tell if a poem is lasting is to wait and see if it lasts. The right reader of a good poem can tell the moment it strikes him that he has taken an immortal wound---that he will never get over it. That is to say, permanence in poetry as in love is perceived instantly. It hasn't to await the test of time. The proof of a poem is not that we have never forgotten it, but that we knew at sight we never could forget it. Robert Frost Untermyer, 111.

For poetry is an attitude of the body. Both antecedent and transcending speech or idea, it is a way of experiencing realities. Max Eastman, The Enjoyment of Poetry, p. 20.¹

Ideally poetry would always be a vivifying, through the magic of imagery and syllable, of present experience in an adventurous world. Eastman, p. 59.

1. Max Eastman, The Enjoyment of Poetry, p. 20. Hereafter as "Eastman, p. 59."

For poetry too is a series of pictures accompanied by appropriate music.
Eastman, p. 95.

It will be pure poetry---a realization in the rhythmic trance of things that are absent and events that are not happening.
Eastman, p. 96.

Poetry is the art of keeping us awake in idleness, and to that end it is almost essential that, however a thing be named, it should not be named with exactly the words that we expect.
Eastman, p. 119.

We may well ascent to the truth which is no theory in the poems themselves---"Lycidas," "Adonais," "Thanatopsis," "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed"---poems that not only realize, but elevate, and make perfect for us that universal sorrow of which only the very love of life's experience, pure poetry, can ever melt or mitigate the sting.
Eastman, p. 135.

There is poetry that runs along the verge of infinity. Repeatedly we span the universe by the juxtaposition of words, and as the architecture of these successive visions is piled before us, we are led almost to expect a revelation of the unseen. This power has hung the veil of sacredness upon the name of poetry---that with these written syllables it can so bring over us the nearness of infinite and universal being.
Eastman, p. 152.

Poetry is not only a realization of things, but it is also a thing itself. It contains present elements to realize and make perfect, or make poignant, for their own sake. Perhaps the finest of all these elements, the most magnetic to those who love life, is a great conflict.
Eastman, p. 154.

Of all things poetry is most unlike deadness. It is unlike ennui, or sophistication. It is a property of the alert and beating hearts....Poetry is unconditionally upon the side of life. But it is also upon the side of variety in life.
Eastman, p. 156.

Poetry is the expression of the heart of man.
Tendencies in Modern American Poetry.
 Amy Lowell, Tendencies in Modern American Poetry, vii.¹

The new poetry strives for a concrete and immediate realization of life; it would discard the theory, the abstraction, the remoteness, found in all classics not of the first order. It is less vague, less verbose, less eloquent, than most poetry of the Victorian period and much work of earlier periods. It has set before itself an ideal of absolute simplicity and sincerity---an ideal which implies an individual, unsteretyped diction; and an individual, unsteretyped rhythm. Thus inspired it becomes intensive rather than diffuse. It looks out more eagerly than in; it becomes objective. The term "exteriority" has been applied to it, but this is incomplete. In presenting the concrete object or the concrete environment, whether these be beautiful or ugly, it seeks to give more precisely the emotion arising from them, and thus widens immeasurably the scope of the art.

Harriet Monroe, The New Poetry--An Anthology, xxxv-xxxvi.²

Great poetry has always been written in the language of contemporary speech, and its theme, even when legendary, has always borne a direct relation with contemporary thought, contemporary imaginative and spiritual life.
 Monroe, xxxvi.

There is poetry, an art of time and sound suggestions and of words that penetrate dimensions of experiences that the senses cannot probe.
 Baker Brownell, The New Universe, 1926, p. 277. ³

Poems are bowls of being; they are cups in which a deep and universal liquor shines; if the rims are trimmed with gold and decorations or raw clay, no one minds, who knows the drink within. Poems send words like bees to the hearts of things and life, and many flowers and many carriers build one sweetness. They seek the final juice

1. Amy Lowell, Tendencies in Modern American Poetry, vii.
2. Harriet Monroe, The New Poetry--An Anthology, xxxv-xxxvi. Hereafter as "Monroe, p. "".
3. Baker Brownell, The New Universe, p. 277. Hereafter as "Brownell, p. "".

and vigor of the world.
Brownell, p. 278.

In poetry is the incandescence and suggestion of a world beyond articulate expression.

Poetry is suggestive. Prose is informative. Poetry awakes realities already immanent in the reader. Prose carries fact or other rational material from one mind to another. The form of poetry or prose can have no dogmas. Used in its kinaesthetic and musical sense language increases in suggestiveness; and with this in view formal technique is designed. But form in itself can never be a true criterion of poetry.
Brownell, p. 279.

Poetry is intuitive, imaginative, spiritual. Prose is discursive, rational, objective. The difference between them originally was not great, but with the growth of science and our increasing ability to analyze and organize our environment, prose has grown in importance and distinction. As language becomes representative of objective, verifiable phenomena, its symbolism hardens; it becomes standardized and exact; its connotations become rigid, permanent, denotative. The practical symbolism of prose supersedes the fluidity and suggestiveness of poetry.
Brownell, p. 280.

Poetry is never cumulative and expert. It is not built up like science on its past. Poetry is its own past and future, and its past and future are poetry's today. It is a warm flame on the world, burning, repeatedly observed. It is as fresh as living and as old as life.
Brownell, p. 282.

Our valuation of poetry, in short, depends upon several considerations, upon the permanent and upon the mutable and upon the transitory. When we try to isolate the essentially poetic, we bring our pursuit in the end to something insignificant; our standards vary with every poet whom we consider.

T. S. Eliot, "Homage to John Dryden", from The Hogarth Essays, The London Omnibus, p. 202.

"POETRY CONSIDERED" 1

1. Poetry is a projection across silence of cadences arranged to break that silence with definite intentions of echoes, syllables, wave lengths.
2. Poetry is an art practiced with the terrible plastic material of human language.
3. Poetry is the report of a nuance between two moments, when people say, 'Listen!' and 'Did you see it?' Did you hear it? What was it?
4. Poetry is the tracing of the trajectories of a finite sound to the infinite points of its echoes.
5. Poetry is a sequence of dots and dashes, spelling depths, crypts, cross-lights, and moon wisps.
6. Poetry is a puppet-show, where riders of skyrockets and divers of sea-fathoms gossip about the sixth sense and the fourth dimension.
7. Poetry is the plan for a slit in the face of a bronze-fountain goat and the path of fresh drinking water.
8. Poetry is a slipknot tightened around a time-beat of one thought, two thoughts, and a last interweaving thought there is not yet a number for.
9. Poetry is an echo asking a shadow dancer to be a partner.
10. Poetry is the journal of a sea animal on land, wanting to fly the air.

1. Carl Sandburg, Atlantic Monthly, 131 (1923) 342-343; and Good Morning, America, preface (1928).

11. Poetry is a series of explanations of life, fading off into horizons too swift for explanations.
12. Poetry is a fossil rock-print of a fin and a wing, with an illegible oath between.
13. Poetry is an exhibit of one pendulum connecting with other and unseen pendulums inside and outside the one seen.
14. Poetry is a sky dark with a wild-duck migration.
15. Poetry is a search for syllables to shoot at the barriers of the unknown and the unknowable.
16. Poetry is any page from a sketchbook of outlines of a doorknob with thumb-prints of dust, blood, dreams.
17. Poetry is a type-font design for an alphabet of fun, hate, love, death.
18. Poetry is the cipher key to the five mystic wishes packed in a hollow silver bullet fed to a flying fish.
19. Poetry is a theorem of a yellow-silk handkerchief knotted with riddles, sealed in a balloon tied to the tail of a kite flying in a wind against a blue sky in spring.
20. Poetry is a dance music measuring buck-and-wing follies along with the gravest and stateliest dead marches.
21. Poetry is a sliver of the moon lost in the belly of a golden frog.
22. Poetry is a mock of a cry at finding a million dollars and a mock of a laugh at losing it.
23. Poetry is the silence and speech between a wet struggling root of a flower and a sunlit blossom of that flower.
24. Poetry is the harnessing of the paradox of earth cradling life and then entombing it.
25. Poetry is the opening and closing of a door, leaving those who look through to guess about what is seen during a moment.

26. Poetry is a fresh morning spider-web telling a story of moonlit hours, of weaving and waiting during a night.
27. Poetry is a statement of a series of equations, with numbers and symbols changing like the changes of mirrors, pools, skies, the only never-changing sign being the sign of infinity.
28. Poetry is a pack-sack of invisible keepsakes.
29. Poetry is a section of river-fog and moving boat lights, delivered between bridges and whistles, so one says, 'Oh!' and another, 'How?'
30. Poetry is a kinetic arrangement of static syllables.
31. Poetry is the arithmetic of the easiest way and the primrose path, matched up with foam-flanked horses, bloody knuckles, and bones, on the hard ways to the stars.
32. Poetry is the shuffling of boxes of illusions buckled with a strap of facts.
33. Poetry is an enumeration of birds, bees, babies, butterflies, bugs, bambinos, babagagas, and bipeds, beating their way up bewildering bastions.
34. Poetry is a phantom script telling how rainbows are made and why they go away.
35. Poetry is the establishment of a metaphorical link between white butterfly-wings and the scraps of torn-up love letters.
36. Poetry is the achievement of the synthesis of hyacinths and biscuits.
37. Poetry is a mystic, sensuous mathematics of fire, smokestacks, waffles, pansies, people, and purple sunsets.
38. Poetry is the capture of a picture, a song, or a flair, in a deliberate prism of words.

CHAPTER VI

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE POETIC

In the foregoing chapter we have set down for the convenience of the reader a wide variety of definitions of poetry. Every reader is at liberty to make such interpretation of them as he wishes. It would appear that in attempting a definition, critics focus their attention on (1) subject matter, (2) purpose, or (3) form. Sometimes they confine themselves to one, sometimes to two, but seldom do they concern themselves equally with all three.

Throughout this study it has never been our purpose to advance a definition of poetry. We have desired to give some of the salient points in the history of a concept. Necessarily our approach thus far has been characterized by its objectivity. Before bringing this thesis to a close we would like to give our ideas of what poetry can not afford to be without.

In his Essentials of Poetry, William Allan Neilson although he refuses to define poetry, nevertheless states his belief that it must consist of a proper balance of the four fundamental elements of imagination, reason, sense of

fact, and intensity. He says that they seem to be present although in varying proportions in all poems. We have no issue with Professor Neilson over the importance of these qualities to poetry. However, our own statement as to what the fundamentals are departs from the view held by him. In the first place, he has made no mention of that quality of periodicity which is necessary to poetry to distinguish it from other forms of expression.

Periodicity manifests itself in different guises for different occasions. In the Anglo-Saxon concept we found it asserting itself through alliteration, cadence, caesura, and strophe. In alliteration we found recurrence of similar sounds at the beginning of words. Cadences had their natural rise and fall. The caesura quite definitely repeated itself in line after line. Then rhyme, assonance, and meter were introduced to provide periodicity in new roles. Rhyme consists of the recurrence of similar sounds at the end of the word rather than at the beginning, as in alliteration; assonance which is so popular in Italian and French literature plays a very unimportant part as a periodic element in English. Meter marks the rhythm off into particular patterns which are repeated time and again. Rhythm itself, which in poetry refers to the recurrence of accented and unaccented beats, was and still remains one of the most

important phases of periodicity.

The general consensus is that poetry can not be properly appreciated unless it is heard. This indicates that sound effects play a large part in the make-up of poetry. Poets strive to achieve a pleasing sound called euphony or a discordant sound called cacophony. Quite naturally poets with the exception of the ultra-modern have striven to create beauty of sound to which end they make use of onomatopoeia, quantity and quality of vowels, and pitch variation. Primitive poetry achieves its effect through onomatopoeia and pitch variation; the Classical depended rather definitely on the quantity of vowels; the one sound-element which seems to be peculiar to Modern prosody is the quality of vowels. Onomatopoeia, although essential to primitive poetry, is almost entirely a decorative device in the poetry of the Classical and Modern periods. Thus it seems that sound appeal is an abiding element in the concept of poetic. As in the case of periodicity it has more than one manifestation.

Periodicity and sound, then, are elemental to poetry. They make an appeal to the senses. It might not be too fantastic to call these fundamentals the physical aspects of poetry. In that case we could refer to the elements of high-seriousness and appropriateness as phases of the

mental make-up of poetry. It may be that the high-seriousness of poets is the result of a sense of contact with the infinite. No matter how much of a realist a person is about the facts of death, he is still impressed by the persistence of life around him. For those whose thought transcends the environs of this world, this sense of the infinite has an even greater prominence. Whatever its cause may be, high-seriousness is present in poetry. Appropriateness might in the last analysis turn out to be the balance of qualities to which Professor Neilson refers. However, we wish to go a little beyond this and suggest also the blending of the idea with the manner in which it is expressed. Hence we might say that any idea has one rhythm or sound which is better suited to convey it than other rhythms and sounds, and that the skilled poet is the one who is able to clothe his ideas in the most appropriate garments.

Now that we have made of poetry a living creature with basic physical and mental characteristics, we are willing to state as our opinion that poetry must have the elements of periodicity, sound, high-seriousness, and appropriateness. Occasionally, poetry has more than that. We do not like to ignore the suggestive quality which the poet achieves primarily by the use of symbolism and of figures of speech.

Partially, but not altogether so, suggestiveness is akin to both high-seriousness and to appropriateness in different ratios. For in the majority of cases the sense of contact with infinity is responsible for the poet's resort to suggestiveness in order to imply more than can be said while his feeling for appropriateness determines him to follow the suggestive technique.

In the reader's mind there is perhaps a desire to know something of the relationship between poetry and the other arts. The points of difference are fewer and the degree of correlation is greater than might have been imagined. Those elements of imagination, reason, sense of fact, and intensity which Colson used to characterize poetry, can as surely belong to painting or music. Both music and the dance place as much stress on periodicity as expressed through rhythm as poetry does. Music depends to an even greater extent than poetry upon sound effects. Architecture exalts appropriateness of form to purpose to a higher degree than does poetry. The art of prose is sometimes a better medium whereby high-seriousness can be expressed than is poetry. Where then, since the qualities which we have considered fundamental to poetry are not her exclusive property, are we to find the characteristic which distinguishes poetry from the other arts? We do not think

that such a characteristic exists. Perhaps all the fine arts are compounds in varying proportions of the same elements which make up poetry.

While poetry has no one characteristic which sets it apart from all other arts, yet it can easily be distinguished from them when they are considered separately. For instance, although poetry does not make use of actual paints, canvas, and brushes in painting its pictures, the poet by use of carefully chosen words strives for the same color effects at which the painter aims. Architecture and poetry, alike in placing importance on structure, differ strikingly in their use of materials. Poems, whereas they are composed of structural units never are built from bricks, stone, wood, or steel. Sculpture and poetry both reverse appropriateness of form, yet the form of poetry is not molded from clay or carved from stone. The rhythms of the dance are executed with bodily movements rather than with words. The sound effects which music achieves even when they bear a likeness to those attained by poetry, are the result of a handling of notes rather than of words. So far, it would be possible to say that poetry strives for the same effects as the other arts but uses different materials. This distinction is not valid when we try to distinguish between the art of prose and that of poetry,

because here the material is the same. Both poetry and prose are modes of expression through words. The distinction between them instead of being based on materials lies in their techniques. While prose has a certain periodicity of its own, it is not the periodicity of rhythm, rhyme, meter, alliteration, assonance, or stanza patterns.

We had hoped that we might get a clear conception of poetry by attempting to compare poetry with the other fine arts and to isolate those characteristics that are exclusively the property of poetry as such. Unfortunately, there are no such elements to isolate. Poetry is composed of the same elements that compose the other fine arts except that each fine art has these elements in varying proportions or makes use of them with varying degrees of emphasis. The poets and the other artists strive for the same effects, but they use different media. In the case of the poet and the writer of prose, they use the same medium, but select the form that is the most appropriate for the purpose which they expect to achieve, and the form which is the most natural to their manner of expression.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the research for this thesis the following conclusions have been reached:

1. That Anglo-Saxon poetry was based upon an entirely different concept of poetic form from that of later periods, being based upon alliteration, cadence, caesura, hemistich and strophe, rather than upon, rhyme, meter, stich, and stanza.

2. That even though most of the elements of Anglo-Saxon poetry disappeared after 1400 as structural devices, many of them are still retained as decorative elements.

3. That after an almost infinite number of experiments in rhythms, meters, and stanzas, the English ear shows a decided preference for iambic and anapestic feet, for the pentameter line, for a stanza ranging from four to nine lines in length, and for a sound-effect based upon the quality of vowels.

4. That individual poets and schools of poetry do not rebel against the fundamental elements of poetry, but show a predilection for certain types of subject-matter and eschew certain methods of treatment as being too conventional or too hackneyed.

5. For the questions originally proposed, these answers are advanced: (1) Each age does not create an entirely new set of poetic tenets. The sense of values developed by an age as a result of the influences of culture and civilization may lead to the adoption of certain decorative devices and modes of treatment which give an external semblance of a new concept, but underneath this exterior, the fundamentals of poetry remain the same as they have always been. (2) The poetry of any given period retains as many of the features of a previous age and absorbs as many foreign elements as make an appeal to its standard of taste. This may give the impression that poetry builds on its past. (3) But in a broader sense, poetry is not cumulative: it contains fundamental elements of periodicity, high-seriousness, and appropriateness that are timeless and invariable and which of necessity admit of no progress. Whether the periodicity takes the form of cadence, rhythm, caesura, meter, alliteration, or rhyme, is no matter: it remains as a basic feature. The high-seriousness of poetry may on occasion be masked, as in satiric verse, but the implication of a desire to speak truth is always there. About poetry worthy of the name there is ever an appropriateness which embodies both good taste and an idea of beauty. (4) Possibly from Anglo-Saxon

times on, but more particularly since 1800, there have been two incompatible mind-sets—one classic, the other romantic—existing in our literature. They differ not upon the basic appeals of poetry but upon choice of subject-matter and manner of treatment. The divergence of their viewpoints as to what constitutes truth and beauty are in part the result of their background and in part the result of individual differences which defy definition. (5) As for subject-matter and treatment, each plays its part. That poetry which has proved lasting and which thus deserves to be considered as exemplifying the English poetic concept has used no unworthy matter for its subject. It is true, however, that the individualism of our present day civilization has lead to a lessening of restrictions on subject-matter. The realm of things thought to be worthy of the poet's attention is expanding. A poet's treatment of his subject-matter grows out of himself. Form in poetry is vital since the fundamentals on which poetry is based are part of man himself rather than merely his inventions.

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